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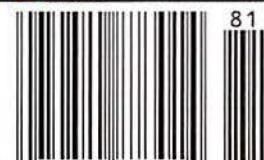
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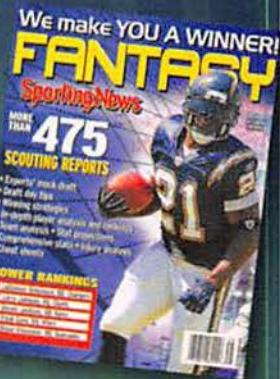
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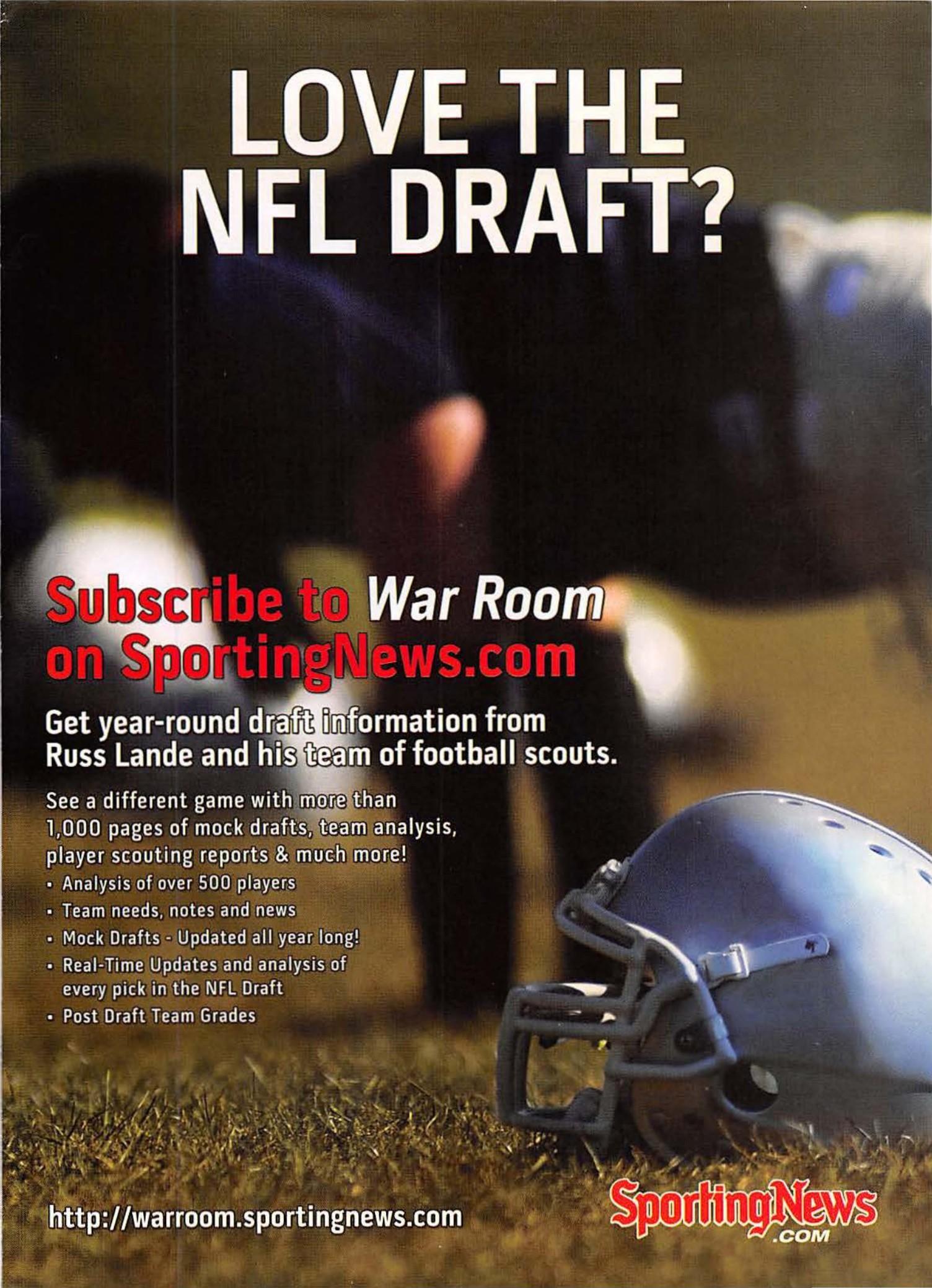
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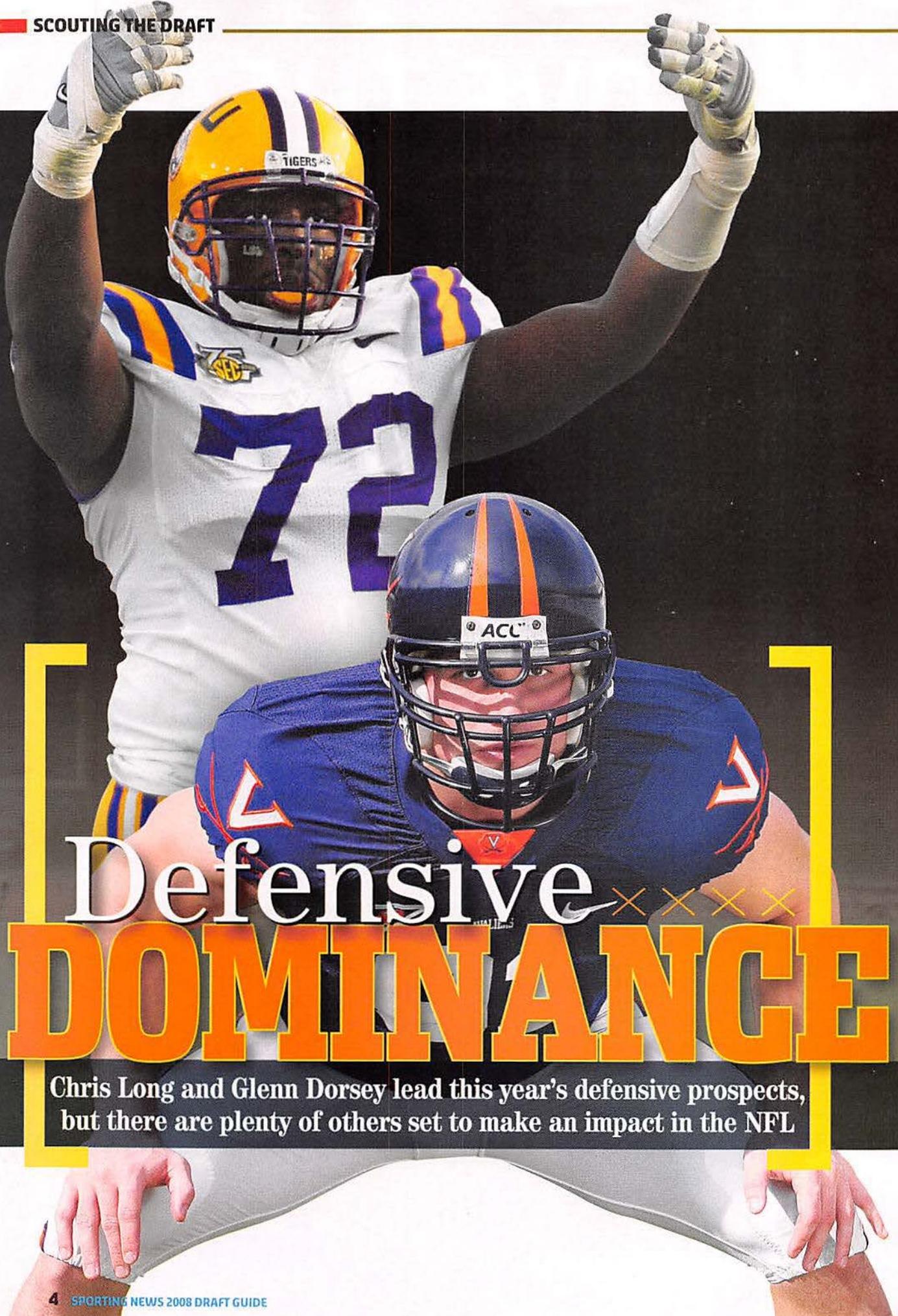
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# Defensive DOMINANCE

Chris Long and Glenn Dorsey lead this year's defensive prospects, but there are plenty of others set to make an impact in the NFL

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# Like FATHER, like SON

Although he has the potential to be just as dominant, Chris Long will always be compared to his NFL Hall-of-Fame dad—and that's just fine by him

By Pete Williams, *Sporting News* Contributor



**T**he imposing physique is similar, as are the gregarious personality and natural leadership skills. He plays the same position in the same defensive scheme. Those close to him say he looks more like his mom, but there is no doubt that Chris Long is his father's son.

Howie Long stayed in the background during his son's four-year career at the

University of Virginia, a low-key place by the standards of college football. Now, with Chris a



likely top-five selection in the 2008 NFL Draft, the comparisons between father and son will become more frequent.

"And I'm fine with that, because I know I wouldn't be where I am today without him," Chris says. "I've been blessed to learn from him, not just from a technical football standpoint, but everything he taught me about working hard and being a good teammate. I am who I am because of my mom and dad."

To look at Chris now, with his NFL-ready skills, people often assume he was pegged for stardom from early childhood, especially with a father in the NFL Hall of Fame. Surely, he was a blue-chip recruit coming out of some football powerhouse high school near Los Angeles, where his father led the Raiders for 13 seasons.

Actually, the opposite is true. When Howie retired from the NFL following the 1993 season, he and his wife, Diane, searched for a place away from the L.A.

spotlight to raise their three sons. They eventually settled on Ivy, Va., a tiny town just outside of Charlottesville, where the University of Virginia is located.

As a seventh-grader, Chris Long joined the junior varsity team at St. Anne's-Belfield School, a small private academy adjacent to the Virginia campus, but it was hardly a big-time prep football atmosphere. While Howie was busy in his post-retirement career as a TV pitchman and an NFL studio analyst for FOX Sports, he still found time to serve as a volunteer football coach.

Chris was a project back then, all arms and legs. Even now, he says he's the worst athlete in his family. Younger brother Kyle is a 6-7 lefthanded pitcher headed to Florida State in the fall, while the third son, Howie Jr., has already committed to play lacrosse at Virginia after he graduates from high school in 2009. Mother Diane Long, by all accounts, plays a mean game of tennis.

"It's never come easy for me," Chris says. "I'm not one of those guys who can pick up a tennis racket or golf club and just be a natural. I've had to work at everything."

It can't be easy being the son of Howie Long, whom the late journalist Hunter S. Thompson once described as "the manliest

Or do you want to go out and make your own name?"

Long played in six games as a true freshman in 2004 on a Virginia team loaded with future NFL players, but it wasn't until his junior year that he began looking like a pro star himself. Last season, with the roster depleted and the Cavaliers picked to finish at the bottom of the ACC's Coastal Division, Long carried the team to a 9-4 record. Six wins came by five points or less, including an 18-17 victory over Maryland that was highlighted by a Long safety.

A consensus All-American, Long won the Ted Hendricks Award as the nation's top defensive end in 2007, and Virginia retired his number before the season was over. Coach Al Groh lobbied for him to be considered for the Heisman Trophy.

Still, Long considers himself a work in progress, and some NFL scouts wonder if he's better suited as a defensive tackle in a 4-3 scheme. However, nobody questions Long's "motor," an umbrella term NFL scouts use for drive, passion, work ethic and leadership skills. Howie Long noticed it well before his son's skills developed.

"We're talking about two elevators: the desire elevator and the ability elevator," he told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* last November. "His ability was on the

I've been blessed to learn from him, not just from a technical football standpoint, but everything he taught me about working hard and being a good teammate. —Chris Long on his father

man on the planet earth." If it weren't enough that Long was the cornerstone and leader of the renegade Raiders, he later upstaged John Travolta in the movie "Broken Arrow," charmed Teri Hatcher in Radio Shack commercials, wrote the best-selling book *Football for Dummies* and appeared on *People* magazine's "50 Most Beautiful People" list in 1999.

But Chris knew that a productive football career wouldn't just be handed to him based on who his father was. That's why he would stay at his high school to lift weights on Friday nights in the winter, long after his basketball games were over, and later outworked everyone on the Virginia football team.

"You walk in the door having come from an affluent family, and people aren't going to respect you," Long says. "I had come from a private school, and people doubted my work habits and whether I could play ball. But what you learn when you get there is that everyone is pretty much equal, and sometimes it's the kid with a privileged upbringing that's the hungriest. It really depends on what drives you. Are you going to be comfortable and satisfied living off your family?

second floor, and his desire was on the 10th floor. I saw that early. I can't imagine somebody wanting something more, and economics have never played a role in that, and they still don't. He plays for respect, and that's what you should play for. And he plays for his team."

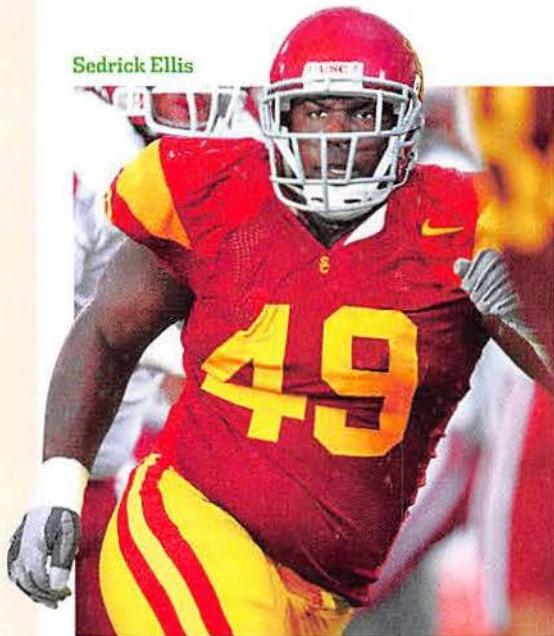
Howie Long and Groh were friends and advocates of the 3-4 defense long before Chris became a college prospect. Howie is generally considered the best defensive end ever to play the scheme, and when Groh was asked before last year's Gator Bowl to compare Chris Long's drive to NFL players he has coached, he didn't hesitate.

"I've coached one once before who was in that category, a player who found a way to overcome whatever opponents tried to do to stop him," Groh said. "You may have heard of him—Lawrence Taylor."

Chris says he just wants to live up to the family name.

"Not everybody gets an opportunity to do something they're passionate about," Long says. "I just want to play as hard as I can. When people finish watching me play, I want them to say, 'Wow, that guy really gave it his all out there.'"

Sedrick Ellis



Phillip Merling



# Front FOUR

Teams who draft players from this solid group of tackles and ends will get immediate contributions

By War Room scouts

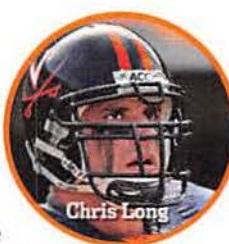
**M**ost defensive linemen are either good pass rushers or strong against the run, but this year two players stand out in both aspects—Virginia's Chris Long and LSU's Glenn Dorsey. Expect the duo to be selected within the first 10 picks.

Dorsey is a surprisingly productive pass rusher despite lacking ideal height and arm length. He is naturally explosive off the ball, which helps him to consistently shoot the gap and get through the line quickly to pressure the quarterback. Dorsey also does not hesitate to smash the quarterback right after the ball is thrown. Even when missing the sack, he makes his presence felt. For a short defensive tackle who lacks great bulk, he is strong at the point of attack and

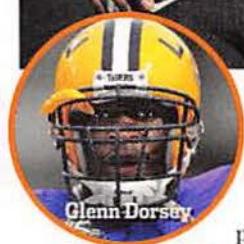
consistently able to stand up offensive linemen, hold his ground, shed blocks and make tackles. While USC's

Sedrick Ellis has improved his draft stock greatly this spring, he is nowhere near the pass rusher or run stuffer that Dorsey is. Ellis is more of a "move" defensive tackle who makes plays by chasing down the ball.

Long is one of the top defensive ends our War Room scouts have ever graded, if not the best. His technique is excellent, and he plays smart. Long uses his hands and instincts effectively against the run and creates havoc when rushing the



Chris Long



Glenn Dorsey

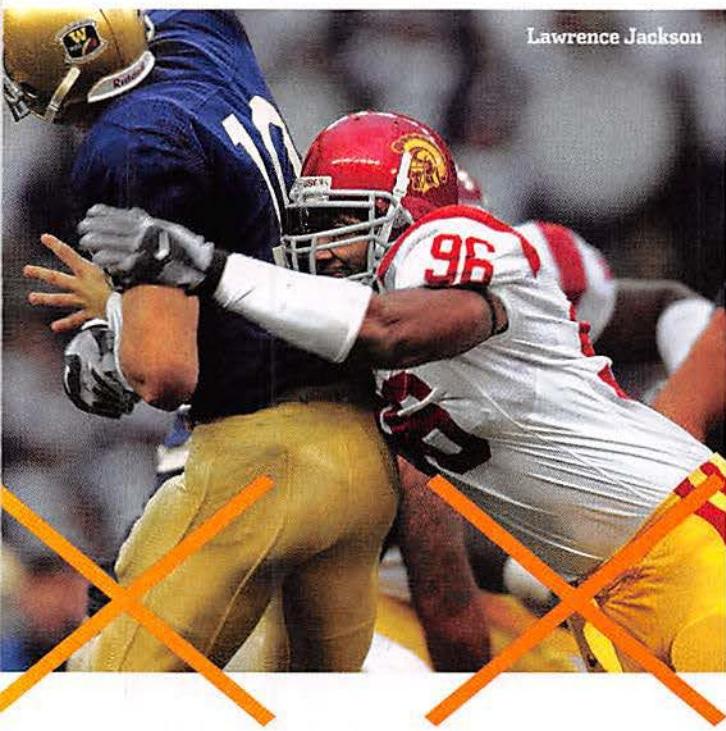
Andre Fluellen

passer. Junior Calais Campbell of Miami (Fla.) rates as the second-best end prospect after Long.

On film, Campbell has

a very similar build to Houston's Mario Williams, and has the ability to be a strong and dominant player in the NFL for years to come. Despite not always using proper technique, he does well in keeping offensive linemen from moving him out of the play on runs and sheds blocks quickly to make tackles.

Behind Dorsey and Long, though, the rest of the top defensive linemen are generally very good in one area but just average in others.



Lawrence Jackson

Three of the best pass rushers in this year's draft are defensive ends Lawrence Jackson of USC and Phillip Merling of Clemson (a junior) and Florida State defensive tackle Andre Fluellen. All three find different ways to pressure the quarterback.

Jackson is tall and solidly built with long arms, and looks polished. He knows how to use his hands and has a variety of pass-rush moves to consistently defeat offensive tackles. Jackson is not the type of end who is going to explode off the ball and beat the offensive tackle around the corner with elite speed. He reminds our scouts of Victor Abiamiri, who Philadelphia drafted in the second round last year. Merling is big and physical and consistently rushes the quarterback very aggressively, combining good playing strength with deceptive athleticism. He has consistently shown the ability to pressure the quarterback from both end spots and will beat offensive tackles with quick spin moves back underneath.

After Dorsey, the most consistently productive pass-rushing tackle is Fluellen, who is undersized and lacks the ideal size to overpower offensive linemen. However, he is very quick, agile and explosive. Fluellen really shined during the week of the Senior Bowl, both in one-on-one and team drills.

The best run stuffer of this year's linemen is Iowa State's Ahtyba Rubin, who has improved his draft status with impressive weeks at the East-West Shrine Game and Senior Bowl. Rubin is massive and fits the mold of a true nose tackle. He has the uncommon playing strength to hold his ground against one-on-one and double-team run blocks, where he ends up shutting down the entire inside area.

Auburn's Pat Sims, Arkansas' Marcus Harrison, Maryland's Dre' Moore and Texas' Frank Okam are also top defensive tackle prospects. Sims is more explosive, while Harrison has impressive ability to stuff the run and make the play when attacking the ballcarrier going forward or just holding his ground. Moore and Okam both have the size and strength to control offensive linemen easily when they play with good technique and intensity.

The one real sleeper among the top pass rushers is UNLV junior defensive end Jeremy Geathers. He explodes off the ball and has the speed to consistently get to the corner. While Geathers is not a big end right now, he has the natural frame to eventually bulk up to 265-270 pounds. Regardless of his size, however, he'll be able to contribute immediately in the NFL.

# Family affair

Athleticism runs through the Campbell brothers' veins—with Calais leading the way to the NFL

Calais Campbell started by flipping through the phone book.

None of the Campbell boys—there are five of them, with Calais in the middle—had played football before. But the 6-year-old said he couldn't wait, and his father, Chuck, told Calais to find a place where kids his age could play.

Calais and his brothers eventually found a nearby recreation center that offered the sport. The oldest three began playing in 1993, and the other two soon followed suit (the oldest and youngest are only six years apart).

Chuck, who passed away due to liver failure during Calais' senior year of high school, had been a pole vaulter at the University of Colorado. He had plenty of advice for his sons as their athletic careers got under way.

"My father told me if you want to be the best, you have to work harder than anyone else," Calais says. "Talent can only get you so far. Everybody has talent."

In the Campbell family, that probably is true, and one can imagine that all the boys received the same advice. They put it to use in everything from football and basketball to chess and video games.

"Oh, man, it was a lot of fun," Campbell remembers. "Everything we did was competition, across the board. I think it really helped us become winners."

Raj Campbell now plays receiver for Division II Adams State College in Alamosa, Colo. Ciarre is a cornerback at Division I-AA Montana, where Severin also plays linebacker.

Jared, the youngest, followed Calais to Miami, where he was a freshman safety last season. And Calais is on his way to the NFL, projected as one of the top defensive ends in the draft and a certain first-round pick.

"I feel like even now we are real competitive," he says. "I think me getting to this level is definitely motivating them to want to be here one

day too. It would be kind of cool to have all five of us in the NFL one day."

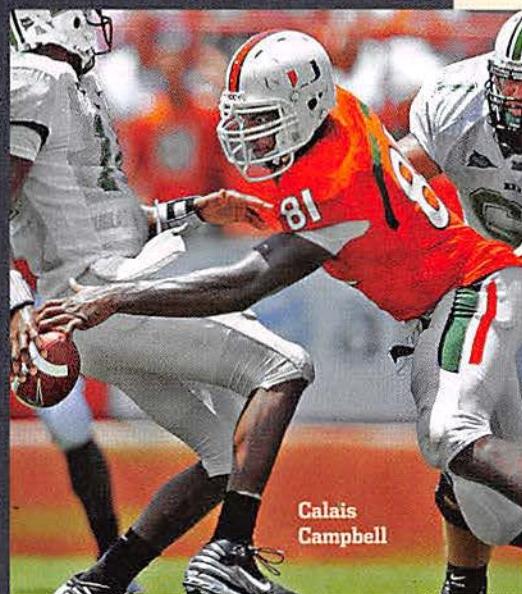
For all his hard work, Campbell possesses rare talent as well. At an athletic 6-8 and 282 pounds, he won team MVP for the Hurricanes during their disappointing 2006 campaign and finished his three-year career with 169 tackles, 38.5 tackles for loss, 19 sacks and six forced fumbles.

Driving Campbell's quest for dominance will be, as always, the family competitive streak. It surfaces again when he talks about his plans for the NFL.

"My goal is to be the best defensive end to ever play the game," he says.

**My father told me if you want to be the best, you have to work harder than anyone else.**

—Calais Campbell



Calais Campbell



While Brian Brohm and Matt Ryan have broken out to become the top quarterback prospects, Colt Brennan and André Woodson have slipped precipitously

**A**s draft talk started heating up prior to the 2007 collegiate season, most of it pegged Louisville's Brian Brohm, Hawaii's Colt Brennan and Kentucky's André Woodson as the top prospects. But as the season progressed, Boston College's Matt Ryan quickly worked himself into the discussion, possibly all the way to the top.

Brohm and Ryan are considered the No. 1 and No. 2 signal-callers on nearly every team's draft board, and who goes first will depend on what the teams at the top are looking for. However, both Brennan and Woodson have seen their stock plummet, and the duo could fall to the fourth or fifth round.

Our scouts still rate Brohm as the best quarterback in the draft, but the margin between him and Ryan is very small. The debate over who is better mirrors the one that rages over Tom Brady and Peyton Manning in the NFL.

Brohm, whose father, Oscar, was a backup quarterback in the late 1960s at Louisville, also has two older brothers who were former Cardinals. Jeff Brohm was Louisville's starting quarterback in the early 1990s and threw passes to brother Greg at wide receiver.

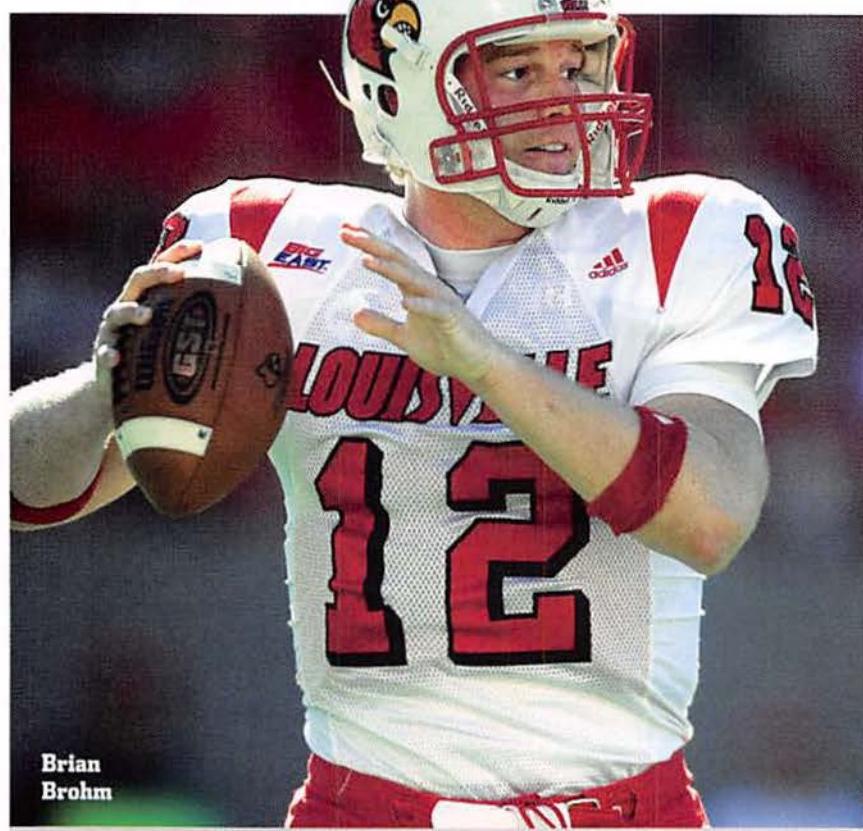
It's clear that Brian possesses the football bloodline, but he doesn't have the huge arm that NFL teams covet. However, the youngest Brohm does have a very compact and efficient delivery and knows how to avoid mistakes. He rarely forces passes and is willing to throw the ball away to avoid a sack.

Ryan, on the other hand, is not as polished when it comes to the consistency of his mechanics. He does, however, make big throws in key situations and consistently carries his team during key drives. Ryan is more of a gambler and will take some chances down the field because he has a big, strong arm.

After Brohm and Ryan, teams might take a chance on Delaware's Joe Flacco, who has the most physical talent of all the quarterbacks in this year's draft. Flacco has the quick and compact delivery and release to get rid of the ball quickly, along with a big-time arm.

As for the two quarterback prospects whose draft stock have slipped most, Brennan and Woodson have a lot working against them, and neither helped themselves in January's Senior Bowl at Mobile, Ala.

Brennan is very thin and looked more like a high school quarterback than an NFL prospect during the weigh-in at the Senior Bowl. Additionally, he has a



Brian Brohm

By War Room scouts

# FAIT



André Woodson

Colt Brennan

below average arm, played in a "run-and-shoot" type of offense at Hawaii and has previously been convicted of second-degree burglary and first-degree criminal trespassing, which led to him leaving Colorado and eventually ending up at Hawaii as a walk-on after a season at Saddleback (Calif.) Community College.

For all his faults, however, Brennan is an excellent leader who takes command of his team, reads defenses very well and

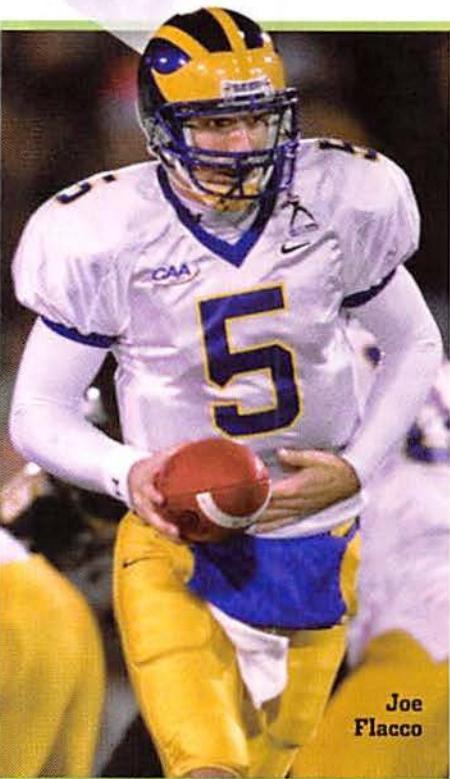
consistently makes the right decisions on throws. Those positives make it possible for him to become a starting signal-caller in the NFL—if given time to develop.

At the Senior Bowl, Woodson showed terrible footwork and a hitch at the back of his delivery that causes the ball to freeze for just a split-second in the air, allowing defenders to break and close on his passes easily. That bad technique greatly hinders his accuracy, which, in

our scouts' opinion, is the top physical tool required of a successful NFL quarterback. Woodson is a major project who is unlikely to ever develop into a quality starter. That's why teams should shy away from drafting him.

Overall, this year's class does not have one quarterback who clearly rises above the rest. It will be interesting to check back in five years and see which signal-caller has proven to be the best.

## Delaware's diamond in the rough



Joe Flacco

First, Joe Flacco took a step back.

The towering product of Audubon High in New Jersey started his college career at Pittsburgh. He redshirted as a freshman in 2003, then found himself backing up sophomore Tyler Palko, who was named offensive captain and team MVP for the 2004 season. Flacco thought he hadn't received a fair shot at the job.

So, instead of waiting his turn, he left in search of a better opportunity, and settled on Division I-AA power Delaware. Four former Blue Hens have been drafted since 2002, but none have gone higher than the sixth round. Only tight end Ben Patrick, who was selected by Arizona last year, has seen significant playing time. Flacco, though, always had the NFL in his plans.

"That's the reason I went to Delaware," he says. "I wanted to go somewhere where I would be able to play and be seen."

Once Flacco got his chance, he set 20 school passing records in two seasons. As a senior, he threw for 4,263 yards and 23 touchdowns against five interceptions, ranking sixth in the nation in passing yards per game (284.2) while leading the Blue Hens to the I-AA championship game.

Since then, Flacco has skyrocketed up the draft charts, due more to his strong arm and 6-6, 232-pound frame than gaudy numbers at Delaware. Many now consider him a lock to go off the board in

the first three rounds, with the potential to sneak into Round 1. But first he's had to show he can compete with college football's top talent.

"I think if you watch my game film, then you can see that I belong," Flacco says. "Coach [K.C. Keeler] taught me how to prepare for a game pretty well, and I think I'm going to pick up the [NFL] game pretty good as long as I have some guidance."

In February's College Football All-Star Challenge, he outperformed Matt Ryan (Boston College), Chad Henne (Michigan), John David Booty (USC) and Colt Brennan (Hawaii), handily winning the long-ball competition with throws of 74 and 71 yards while also taking first place in the scramble drill and placing third in accuracy.

"He looked good," said one scout at the Senior Bowl, where Flacco helped himself while better-known quarterbacks such as Kentucky's André Woodson and Brennan saw their draft stock plummet.

"He stood tall, showed some touch. Not great velocity, but he got that ball away quickly in the red area and showed he can speed up his release. He's got some potential."

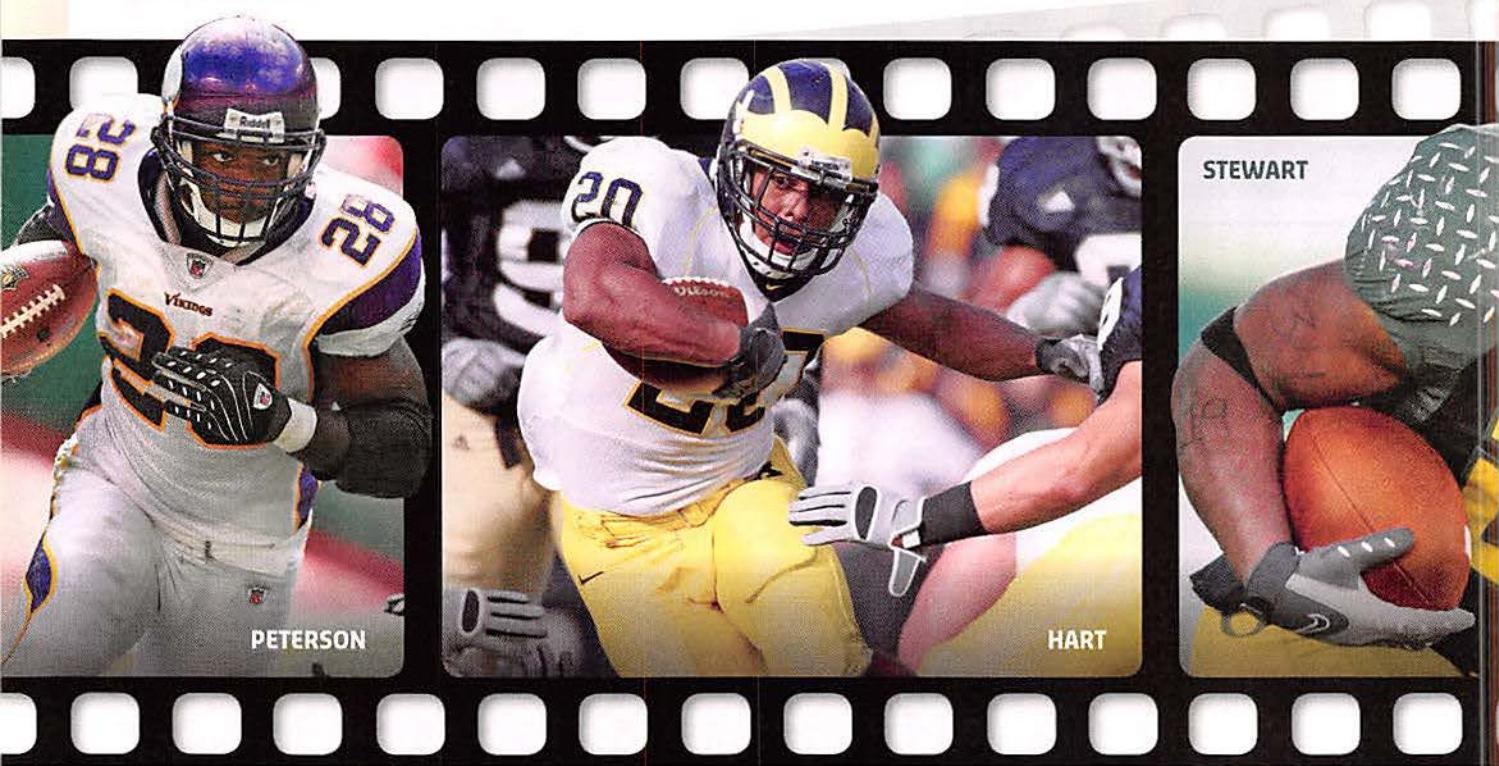
After toiling so long in obscurity, Flacco also has some extra motivation, which never hurts.

"I definitely have a chip on my shoulder," he says. "The small [school] guys always do."

—Mike Giglio

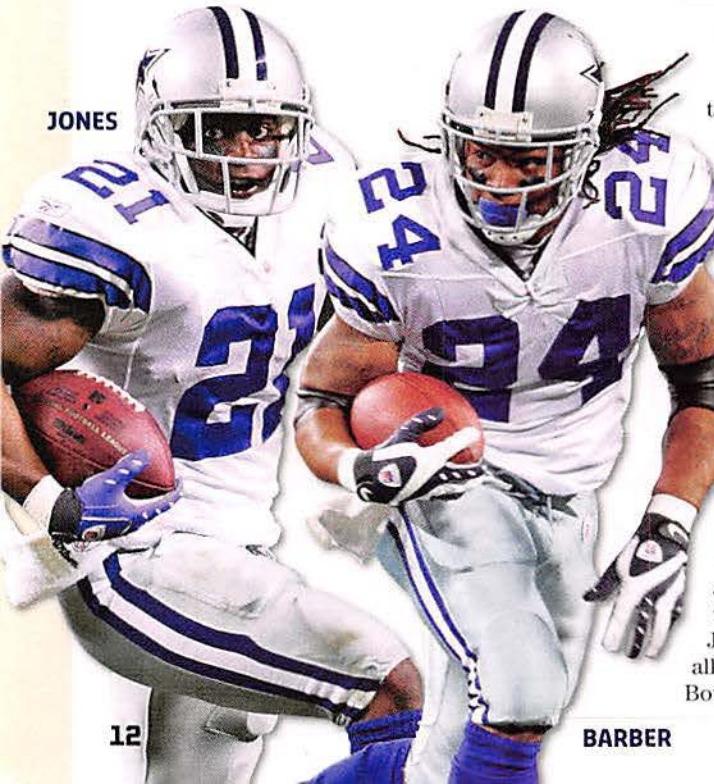
# RUNNING

By War Room scouts



STEWART

Does the new trend toward a two-back system in the NFL affect how this year's draft prospects are evaluated?



JONES

BARBER

**W**hile most NFL teams now covet two good running backs to limit the chance of injury and add a change of pace, most still prefer to carry one clear-cut starter and a quality backup. Teams have found success with this system in recent years, particularly in Dallas and Denver.

The Cowboys split time between Marion Barber and Julius Jones last season, and got a return of 12 touchdowns and more than 1,500 yards. Denver coach Mike Shanahan has been a proponent of using multiple running backs in recent years, and the New York Giants rode the one-two punch of Brandon Jacobs and Ahmad Bradshaw all the way to their first Super Bowl title in 17 seasons.

But this system has also produced mediocre results, as in Carolina, where DeShaun Foster and DeAngelo Williams combined to break the 1,500-yard barrier but scored a total of just seven rushing touchdowns. The situation was even worse with Falcons running backs Warrick Dunn and Jerious Norwood, who mustered only five rushing scores between them.

With teams now relying on the two-back system more than ever, prospects have begun to witness their positions across NFL draft boards fluctuate more than usual. For instance, a team with a strong running back may rate a very talented but smaller back much higher than one without a primary starter.

A perfect example of this came to pass in 2006, when the Jacksonville Jaguars selected Maurice Jones-Drew in the second round to spell starter Fred Taylor. Other teams (most without an established runner) didn't have Jones-Drew rated as high, because they questioned his

# AWAY



durability as an NFL starter due to his lack of height.

Five of the top six backs this year rate as mid-first-round picks, but none compare with Adrian Peterson, who was selected seventh overall by the Minnesota Vikings last year and set numerous records en route to winning Offensive Rookie of the Year.

When the 2007 college season began, the crop of senior running-back prospects was not overly impressive, with Michigan's Mike Hart leading the way. But with a number of juniors declaring early, the position has become loaded. While there will be debate in every draft room as to what order to rate the underclassmen, it's almost a lock that six juniors will be selected before any senior.

Schools rarely have two first-round prospects, especially at the same position. However, Arkansas' Darren McFadden and Felix Jones will likely both hear their names called early in the draft. McFadden has received lots of national attention and is the

more proven back, having shown toughness, competitiveness and durability as the primary ballcarrier with the Razorbacks. Jones isn't as aggressive or as powerful a runner, but has more versatility. While McFadden will be a true power back in the NFL and receive the majority of his team's carries, Jones should be similar to former Giants running back Tiki Barber, making his impact on numerous facets of the offense.

Three other underclassmen made names for themselves in 2007, improving their draft status in the process. Oregon's Jonathan Stewart entered his junior year viewed as somewhat of a disappointment, having yet to produce at the level expected of such a highly recruited back. However, he carried the Oregon offense last year after quarterback Dennis Dixon went down with a knee injury. Of all the prospects at this position, Stewart has the best combination of size and speed.

Illinois' Rashard Mendenhall is a well-built tailback with the strength to break tackles and speed to make big plays. With his size, strength, athleticism and instincts, he has a ton of upside. Not many big backs have soft hands, but Mendenhall bucks that trend and will be able to contribute to the passing game early in his career.

While McFadden, Jones, Stewart and Mendenhall have all received a ton of publicity as possible first-round picks, Rutgers' Ray Rice has slid under the radar. Rice clearly lacks the size of his peers at this position (which is always a concern), but should be productive in the NFL.

Once all of the above underclassmen are off the board, expect to see Michigan's Hart as the first senior drafted. He's not big, but Hart will fit well with many of the teams that use two running backs as part of their game plan.

## BUST-BOUND

In every draft, approximately 30 percent of first-round picks and an even larger percentage of second- and third-round selections end up as busts. These players often displayed signs coming out of college that should have raised red flags or dropped their draft stock.

Here are some prospects in this year's draft who have one or more of the traits that often lead a player to failure in the NFL:

### 1 ANDRÉ WOODSON QB, Kentucky

Woodson is a very gifted prospect who is blessed with outstanding athletic ability, a strong arm, good character and leadership skills. However, he is far from a polished quarterback, even though he'll likely be drafted high (somewhere between Rounds 1 and 3). Teams do not have the patience or time to reconstruct Woodson's throwing technique and fundamentals. His footwork is bad, and he has a hitch at the top of his throwing motion, which hurts his accuracy.

### 2 DeSEAN JACKSON WR, California

Jackson is one of the premier receivers/return men available in the 2008 draft. On the field, he has the physical tools to be an elite playmaker, but has a bit of an ego and will run his mouth at times. Unless they become dominant like Randy Moss or Terrell Owens, problematic receivers rarely survive in the NFL.

### 7 DOMINIQUE RODGERS-CROMARTIE CB, Tennessee State

Rodgers-Cromartie brings to mind former Oklahoma cornerback Andre Woolfolk, who was drafted in the first round by the Titans in 2003 and is now out of the league. Similar to Woolfolk, Rodgers-Cromartie had an excellent Senior Bowl showing, leaving NFL scouts trying to justify his inconsistent production at Tennessee State. Despite being taller than 6-0 with long arms and elite natural athleticism, he was consistently beaten by inferior receivers and allowed too many catches while with the I-AA Tigers.

### 3 JAMES HARDY WR, Indiana

Hardy is a tall receiver with excellent hands and the athleticism to be an impact player in the NFL. However, he has been involved in major off-field issues and succeeding in the NFL usually requires maturity, character and work ethic.

### 4 FRED DAVIS TE, USC

Davis is an elite athlete and would be a first-round consideration, but is barely taller than 6-2. Tight ends who lack good height often

# Mystery MAN

By Steve Greenberg, Sporting News

**Tommy Blake may turn out to be one of the top players in the draft—but could also be out of the league in a year**

It was Aug. 16, about halfway through a fall camp in which Tommy Blake, a fifth-year senior, had been the best player on the field—255 pounds of greased lightning coming off the edge. NFL scouts had been coming to TCU's practices in waves and leaving with notebooks full of high first-round praise. But the day took a strange turn when Blake, known by fans and local media as one of the most pleasant and quotable Horned Frogs, began showing signs of anger. Coaches got on him, but Blake argued back. And then he simply walked off the practice field.

He called his sister, who drove the 370 miles from their south Texas hometown of Aransas Pass and brought him back home. TCU coach Gary Patterson flew down two days later and persuaded Blake to return to campus and rejoin practice.

"It was two-a-days," Patterson says. "Nobody was happy."

But things only got worse back in Fort Worth.

Blake continued to exhibit disturbing, often combative, behavior. Blake was held out of the season opener at Baylor with an undisclosed medical condition. He played poorly in the next three games and then was given a medical leave of absence. Blake returned to the field for the final four games of the regular season, but was overweight and at times visibly uninterested. His draft stock plummeted.

In late January, heeding the counsel of his agent, Blake went public for the first time about his mental illness, telling *Sporting News*—though declining to discuss it in depth—that he was being treated and medicated for depression and social anxiety disorder.

There are clear reasons to believe therapy sessions and medication—the specifics of which the Blake camp would not disclose—have helped. For one, Blake, described by a program insider as a student who did "just enough to stay eligible" his first four years, managed to stay on top of his studies in the fall, finishing with his best semester grades. And completing the football season—during which he played far below his standards but led the team over the final five games with six tackles for loss—was an accomplishment not to be overlooked.

"With clinical depression or social phobia, people recover from these things all the time," says Dr. Xavier Amador, an adjunct professor in clinical psychology at Columbia University. "The bottom line is these are really treatable disorders. If you're in treatment and follow it up with the proper medication, the response rates and the recovery rates are really high."

But in some circles, the damage to Blake is considered irreparable.

"I wouldn't touch Tommy Blake," says a veteran scout of four different NFL teams who watched Blake up close in 2007 and is familiar with the details of his medical condition. "I don't know how you can justify bringing a player in who has mental instability. One thing you have to have to play in the NFL is your head screwed on right each week."

Here are two lists from our War Room scouts—one comprised of players who are likely to be drafted despite off-field issues (a category Blake falls in) and the other made up of players who probably won't get picked because their talent level isn't high enough for teams to take the risk.

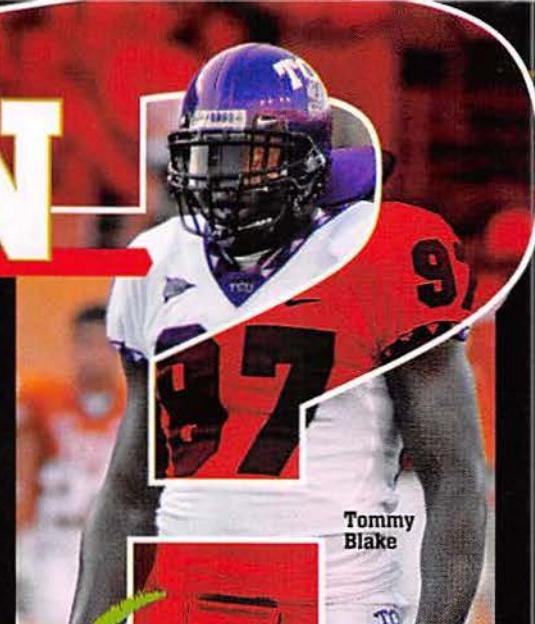
## Teams should be wary of ...

### 1. Adrian Arrington, WR, Michigan

Arrington came out early for the draft, but some NFL scouts who have broken down his film have been very disappointed in his play. He was also arrested in October and charged with misdemeanor domestic violence (stemming from an alleged argument with his girlfriend), which was later dropped. While there is a good chance that he will be drafted despite his off-field issues, Arrington's draft status has taken a hit over the last year, and it would not be a surprise if he ended up falling through many teams' boards.

### 2. Maurice Purify, WR, Nebraska

Purify was viewed as a top receiver prospect prior to the 2007 season, but with Nebraska's struggles on the field, his draft stock fell throughout the year. Last May, he was arrested on two counts of assault and one count of resisting arrest. Almost a month later, Purify was cited for driving while intoxicated. He later made a plea arrangement that covered both cases, receiving a year of probation and a fine of \$1,250. When adding his off-field issues to a disappointing senior season, the odds are that Purify will go undrafted and struggle to even get a chance as a free agent.



Teams should take a chance on ...

### 1. Jack Ikegwuonu, CB, Wisconsin

Ikegwuonu was an elite cornerback prospect before he tore an ACL right after announcing his intentions to leave school a season early to enter the draft. He was arrested two years ago and charged with residential burglary and criminal trespassing after he and his twin brother, Bill, allegedly broke into an apartment and tried to steal a video game system. He has pled not guilty and the case is still pending. Despite his off-field issue, Ikegwuonu is still going to get a chance in the NFL. If he had never gotten hurt, Ikegwuonu would have been a first-round pick, but is now likely to slide into the third or fourth round.

### 2. James Hardy, WR, Indiana

While still a potential first- or second-round selection, Hardy's off-field troubles could come back to haunt him on draft day. In May 2006, he was arrested for domestic battery, as authorities said he attacked his girlfriend and their then-infant son. The charge was later dismissed after Hardy (who was suspended for Indiana's first two games of that season after the incident) participated in a diversion program. As teams investigate his background, they will be very leery of using a high pick on him, but Hardy is so talented that he'll likely go on Day 1.

### 3. Justin King, CB, Penn State

King is a gifted athlete with the physical tools that are hard to find in a cornerback. But there were real concerns about his NFL future last April after he and some other Penn State players were allegedly involved in an off-campus fight. While King was originally charged with felony criminal trespassing, disorderly conduct and harassment, he was later cleared of all three charges and returned for the 2007 season. Despite the publicity and original charges, King's draft status shouldn't be affected much.

### 4. Colt Brennan, QB, Hawaii

Before he set multitudes of records at Hawaii, Brennan began his career at Colorado. It was there that the quarterback was arrested and charged with sexual assault. That was later dismissed, but he was convicted of second-degree burglary and first-degree criminal trespassing. Brennan, who was kicked off the Colorado football team, was sentenced to a week in jail and received four years of probation. However, he had no reported incidents while at Hawaii and will definitely get an opportunity to start in the NFL.

# The (other) Trojan pipeline

**Leodis McElvin is the latest in a recent line of Troy prospects with star potential**

By Mike Giglio, *Sporting News*

**I**nside tiny Ladd-Peebles Stadium in Mobile, Ala., among a sea of helmets bearing the logos of football powers like LSU and USC, one with crossing white swords over a dark red background begins to stand out.

With midweek practice drills under way at January's Senior Bowl, hordes of NFL coaches and scouts look on from their perches along the chain-linked fence or rusted bleachers surrounding the field. Wide receivers Andre Caldwell (Florida) and Lavelle Hawkins (California) impress as expected, but so does a relatively little-known defensive back who appears to be giving them fits.

By the end of the week, Leodis McElvin of Troy had worked himself into consideration as the top cornerback talent in town, likely securing a place in the first round of the 2008 NFL Draft in the process.

"It's going to feel great," McElvin says of hearing his name called after taking an unlikely route to football's biggest stage.

When he does enter the NFL, however, McElvin won't be the only former Trojan around. Seven alumni from the

lower Alabama school of 6,100 students played in the NFL last year. (Troy, a town of 14,000, is located 175 miles northeast of Mobile.) Pro Bowl defensive end DeMarcus Ware went 11th overall to the Dallas Cowboys in 2005. Osi Umenyiora, another Pro Bowl end, and kicker Lawrence Tynes were teammates for two seasons at Troy and played together for the Super Bowl XLII champion New York Giants.

"Troy University is coming up," McElvin says, adding that he keeps in regular contact with Ware and the other Troy alums.

Troy coach Larry Blakeney considers speed to be McElvin's biggest asset in the pros.

"He's able to gamble and catch up," Blakeney says. "He can be sitting on a comeback, and unless you fool him really badly, he's going to catch back up if you beat him deep. He has closing speed, so he is able to have confidence when he thinks he has somebody scouted out."

Blakeney credits a constant surveillance of schools on his recruiting radar—"365 days a year, every year of the world"—for the program's success in finding players of McElvin's talent and



character. Both Ware and Umenyiora played at tiny Auburn (Ala.) High, and Tynes is one of a number of players Blakeney has recruited out of Milton (Fla.) High. McElvin attended Ware County High in Waycross, Ga.

"All these kids out there want to go to Division I, and rightfully so," Blakeney says. "And then they sort of find their home. Some of them, at the time they graduate from [high] school, maybe aren't commanding quite as much attention from the vaunted recruiting-analyst experts. ... So they are relegated to being evaluated by guys like us, who come in there and try to keep up with their particular schools."

In his 17 years at the helm, Blakeney has produced 13 draft picks and 33 undrafted free-agent signees while taking the program through two class transitions. The Trojans moved from Division II to Division I-AA in 1992, then jumped to the top level nine years later.

They went 8-4 in 2007, earning a second straight share of the Sun Belt Conference

title with a 6-1 record. All three non-league losses came against SEC teams, and the Trojans notched a big win over Oklahoma State along the way. The stacked schedule helps players receive recognition and allows pro scouts to gauge them against some of college football's best players. It prepares the team for conference play as well—"if you don't get killed," according to Blakeney.

Troy also views NFL personnel as members of its staff, allowing full access to practices, players and coaches during the season.

"They're treated like kings," Blakeney says. "If it helps give one player a chance, it's worth it."

The Trojans will face LSU and Ohio State in a two-week span this year, followed by a rematch at Oklahoma State, giving the next batch of NFL hopefuls the chance to show that they fit in with the top talent at America's premier football schools.

Occasionally, one will even stand out.

## Here are some other small-school players War Room scouts believe could become NFL starters:

### 1 Joe Flacco QB, Delaware

Flacco started his college career at Pittsburgh and spent a season as Tyler Palko's backup before transferring to Delaware, where he became the starter. Flacco is tall, surprisingly agile and does an excellent job of making good throws on the move. He also has a quick and compact delivery and release.

### 2 Dexter Jackson WR, Appalachian State

After struggling through an inconsistent 2007 season at Appalachian State, Jackson shined at the East-West Shrine Game, improving his draft status from late-round consideration to a likely fourth- or fifth-round pick who could even slide into Round 3. He shows the quickness, burst and hands to consistently make plays.

### 3 Shawn Murphy G, Utah State

Murphy is an athletic guard with the strength, competitiveness and aggressive playing style to

become a very good starting guard in the NFL. He is not an elite prospect but should be a third- or fourth-round pick who will challenge for a starting job as a rookie.

### 4 Chad Rinehart OT/G, Northern Iowa

Rinehart is a very athletic offensive lineman who was dominant at a lower level of competition. He opened scouts' eyes when he maintained that high level of production during the week of the Senior Bowl. He has moved up teams' draft boards from late-round consideration to a likely second- or third-round selection.

### 5 Ezra Butler MLB, Nevada

Butler was overshadowed much of last season by UNLV's Beau Bell, who plays the same position in the same state. While Bell looks likely to be drafted in Round 1, Butler has proven that he too is a top athlete, and he will

be a second- or third-round pick who should immediately compete for a starting job.

### 6 Jason Jones DE, Eastern Michigan

Jones is not going to start right away because he is still raw and developing, but he will make an impact as a pass-rushing rookie with his combination of size, strength, athleticism, quickness and competitiveness. In a season or two, Jones will become a good full-time end.

### 7 Xavier Omon RB, Northwest Missouri State

Omon will likely be the first small-school running back drafted. He had a very good week at the Texas vs. The Nation All-Star Game and showed that he has the foot quickness, agility and burst NFL scouts previously questioned. While Omon won't be an instant-impact back, he should contribute as a rookie.

# Building Blocks

Three football media personalities discuss who's most impressive to them in this year's draft class

As told to Pete Williams, *Sporting News* contributor

## MIKE MAYOCK

○ Draft analyst for NFL Network and former New York Giants safety



I find Matt Ryan very intriguing. He's the highest-rated quarterback on my board by far, and with three teams (Miami, Atlanta and Baltimore) in the top eight picks that have to make a quarterback decision, it's going to be really interesting where he ends up.

With Ryan, I always offer the caveat that I know him and his family personally. His uncle, John Loughery, and I were teammates and roommates at Boston College. We're both Philadelphia-area guys. Ryan played high school football in the same league that we played in and my father coached in, and I even watched him play basketball in high school. So I have to be careful on how I evaluate him, not treating him any differently than anyone else.

His work ethic is like Peyton Manning's. After family and God, football is the most important thing in his life. He's a tape junkie and workout warrior who just loves the game, and that's what you want to see at the quarterback position.

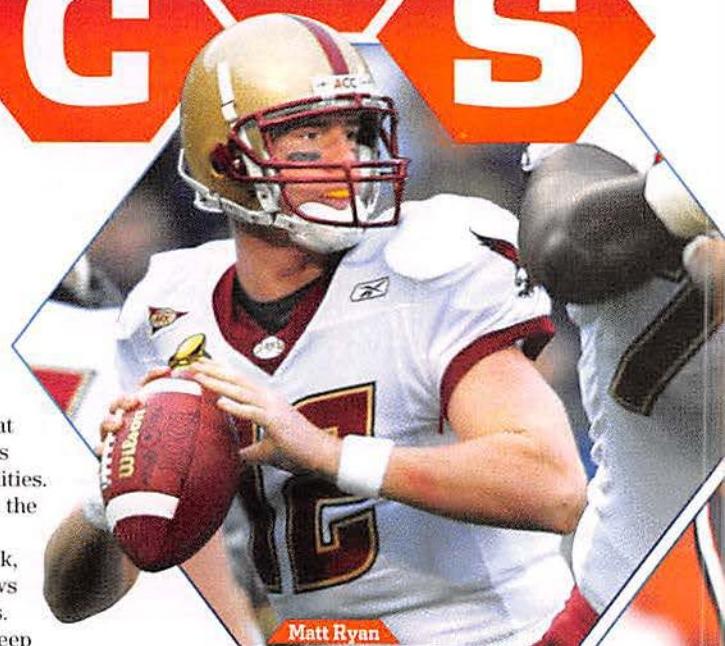
He's got an above-average arm, but not as strong as JaMarcus Russell, who had the strongest arm of anyone I've ever seen coming out of college. But it's above average, which also could be said of Manning and Tom Brady. He can make every throw and is more athletic than people thought coming off his junior

year, which he played with a broken foot. That speaks to his toughness and his leadership qualities.

He's got good feet in the pocket, but the knock on him—the only knock, really—is that he throws too many interceptions. He forces the ball on deep routes and even threw a few on underneath routes, hitting defensive linemen playing zone blitz right in the chest. So he had a lot of interceptions, but the knock isn't necessarily on his decision-making. I would say he forces too many balls because he didn't have too many receivers that could open up on their own at BC.

Other than that, he'll grade high everywhere else. He's a natural leader, great off the field, and with interceptions, that's correctable. He's a big kid, but I think of him as "sneaky athletic." I saw him play basketball, and he can move his feet; he moves better in the pocket than people think. When he scrambles like he did last season against Virginia Tech and Clemson to win games in the last two minutes, you'll notice he scrambles with his eyes down the field. So even though he naturally moves to open areas, his eyes are always down the field, buying time for his receivers to get open.

After Ryan, I think there's a drop-off at quarterback in this year's draft. I have Chad Henne at No. 2 and Brian Brohm at No. 3, both as late-first-round or early second-round guys. With young

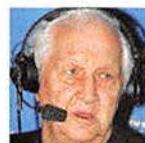


Matt Ryan

quarterbacks, you worry about the beating they might take as rookies, especially since a rebuilding team isn't going to have much of an offensive line. But Ryan is the type of kid, because of his intelligence and work ethic and toughness, I think can play as a rookie. Just look at Manning. The Colts were 3-13 his rookie year and 13-3 the next season. He was better in Year 2 because he had the mental toughness to deal with how bad they were the year before. The same is true with Ryan. He's so mentally tough, he'll step up to the challenge.

## GIL BRANDT

○ Sirius NFL Radio host and longtime former Dallas Cowboys general manager



Chris Long reminds me of his dad, (NFL) Hall-of-Famer Howie Long. He has an explosive first step and gives an all-out effort on every play. As a rusher, he has very quick hands and can turn the corner on the edge rush. He has very good initial quickness, can read blocks and find the ball. He's got outstanding pursuit, with

very good strength and explosion. He leads by example, is very mature and his character is just outstanding.

His best position is defensive end, though there are people that think he can be a 3-4 outside linebacker. I think he's a 4-3 defensive end. It's hard to go from playing with your hand on the ground to being a stand-up player. A lot of guys have tried it, with mixed results. I think he's too good of a pass rusher playing that defensive right end to do anything other than that.

Like his dad, he doesn't know the meaning of "slow down." But he doesn't want to be known as Howie Long's son; he wants to be known as Chris Long. I'm involved in picking the *Playboy* All-America Team, and I spent three days with him and the rest of the team in Arizona before last season, and you could tell how guys just gravitate to him as a leader. He's what you want both on and off the field.

He plays a premium position. Quarterback is obviously the most important,

contributes right away. Kids are coming into the league so much more prepared now, especially when they're four-year college players like Chris. You look back two years ago, there were 16 or so rookies that started every game and all but one of them had completed their eligibility. Teams would have been interested in Chris had he come out last year, but he's another argument for why guys should stay in school.

People always talk about speed, but when you're looking at an end, you really should just consider that first step, and that's what Chris has; he's very explosive. We're not talking 10 or 20 yards. We just want him to have that quick initial speed and he's got that, big time.

#### DAN LEBERFELD

○ Co-host of "NFL Rewind" and "Press Coverage" on Sirius NFL Radio



I've been impressed with Vernon Gholston of Ohio State. There are so many teams now using the 3-4 defense, from the Patriots to the Jets, Cleveland, San Diego, Dallas and now Miami presumably with Bill Parcells in charge. A player like Gholston is going to be in demand. He's a 'tweener, a defensive end who is too small to play in a classic 4-3 scheme, but he'll be perfect in the 3-4 because of his great speed and athleticism. Teams will be drooling over him.

I saw him several times this season and obviously he was dynamic in the Michigan game, where he had three sacks.

And that sort of overshadowed his performance against Wisconsin, when he had four sacks.

He can be a little inconsistent, which is a concern, but he's a good character kid so you know he'll work hard to be a more consistent performer. If you look at the 14 sacks he had last season, the speed he brings off the edge and having the perfect build (6-4, 260) for a 3-4 outside linebacker, you have to figure he'll be able to make a smooth transition to the NFL.

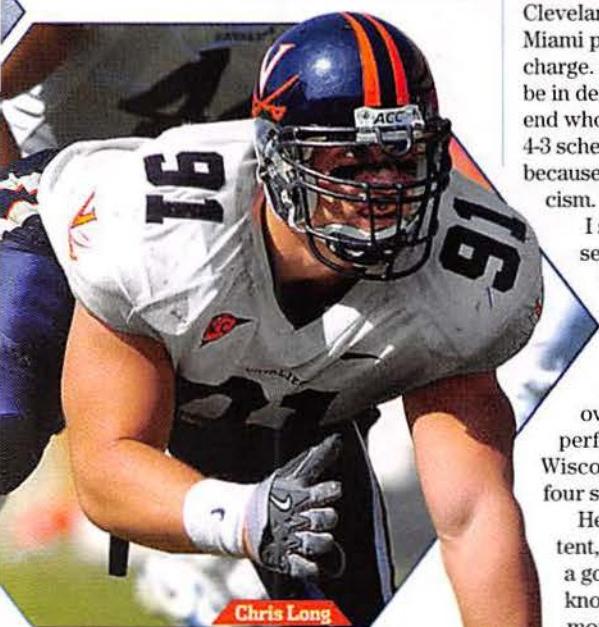
He's entering the draft as a redshirt junior, but he's had four years of big-time college football at Ohio State and clearly was manhandling people this past season. Physically, he's obviously ready, and he has a reputation for working hard in the weight room. I like the fact that he's

worked with (New England's) Mike Vrabel on technique. Vrabel is one of the best defensive linemen the Buckeyes have ever produced, and the Patriots obviously have set the gold standard for the 3-4 defense.

Even though Gholston's a great fit in the 3-4, it's probably a mistake to pigeonhole him. He could play in the Tampa 2 defense they run in Tampa Bay or Detroit. It's a 4-3, but they don't require that 280-pound guy. But most people see him as a 3-4 outside linebacker. He did drop into coverage at times at Ohio State, so it's not like that would be something new to him.

The bottom line is that you just don't come across many premier pass-rushing talents, and that's especially true with this year's draft class. Mario Williams is a different kind of end, but the way he played this past season validated being picked No. 1 (in 2006), showing what a rare commodity pass rushers are. Look at DeMarcus Ware and Shawne Merriman. They were picked 11th and 12th in 2005 and look like bargains.

Some might say it's a reach for the Jets to spend the sixth overall pick on Gholston, but I don't think so. He's an ideal fit for their 3-4 scheme, and I'd be surprised if he gets past the Jets.



Chris Long

but after that, left tackle and defensive right end are probably No. 2 and No. 2a. It's hard to go into the third or fourth round and find good pass rushers. It's a lot easier to find cornerbacks and running backs than it is players at those positions, which is why you see teams, especially in recent years, spending high picks on pass rushers.

If he has any weaknesses, I don't know what they are. You look at him at 6-3½ and you'd like him to be 6-5 like Mario Williams. Height is important, but it's not the end all. Look at Elvis Dumervil (of the Broncos). He's maybe 5-11.

I think Chris is going to be a guy who not only plays right away, but



Vernon Gholston

# All-Star Report

In college football's annual postseason showcases, some players boosted their draft stock, while others saw their status sink

By Mike Giglio

## HULA BOWL, Jan. 12, Honolulu

- ▲ **Cincinnati DE Angelo Craig** had a monster first half, with two forced fumbles, a sack and a tackle for loss.
- ▼ **Washington State QB Alex Brink** managed to throw two interceptions against just three completions.
- ▲ **Marshall QB Bernard Morris** passed for 172 yards and a score to spark the East team.
- ▲ **California WR Robert Jordan** had the West's only score, as well as four catches for 84 yards.

## EAST-WEST SHRINE GAME, Jan. 19, Houston

- ▼ **Penn State QB Anthony Morelli** needed a good showing, but threw as many interceptions (two) as completions in 10 attempts.
- ▲ **Utah State WR Kevin Robertson** turned in 129 all-purpose yards, including a 72-yard punt return for a touchdown.
- ▼ **TCU DE Tommy Blake** was slow and overweight in workouts, then exited the game early with an ankle injury, exacerbating concerns about his health and readiness.
- ▲ **San Diego QB Josh Johnson** was named MVP after rushing for 91 yards and throwing for 78 and a touchdown.

## SENIOR BOWL, Jan. 26, Mobile, Ala.

- ▼ **Hawaii QB Colt Brennan** looked frail and shaky all week. He completed just two of six passes with no touchdowns, an interception and two sacks.
- ▲ **California WR LaVelle Hawkins** reeled in three catches for 63 yards and a TD, and added a 33-yard kick return.
- ▲ **Notre Dame DT Trevor Laws** showed a good motor while producing six tackles, a sack and a fumble recovery.
- ▲ **Tulane RB Matt Forte** won the MVP award with a game-high 59 rushing yards, along with four catches for 38 yards.

▲ improved stock ▼ hurt stock

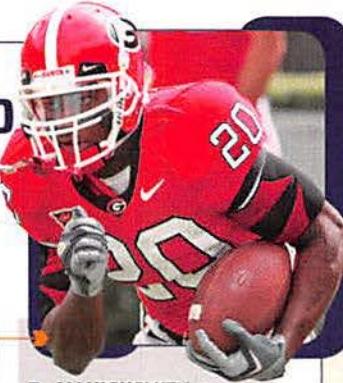
## I HEAD OF THE CLASS ▶

Here's a breakdown of the number of players drafted from each collegiate conference in last year's draft:



## BEST UNDERSIZED PLAYERS

These draft prospects may not have the ideal height or weight (or both) for their position, but they make up for it with athleticism and instincts.



### ► THOMAS BROWN

RB, Georgia (5-8, 199)

### ► FRED DAVIS

TE, USC (6-2, 250)

### ► KYLE DeVAN

C, Oregon State (6-1, 301)

### ► JORDON DIZON

OLB, Colorado (5-11, 228)

### ► JUSTIN FORSETT

RB, California (5-7, 190)

### ► VINCE HALL

ILB, Virginia Tech (5-11, 237)

### ► MIKE HART

RB, Michigan (5-9, 205)

### ► JONATHAN HEFNEY

S, Tennessee (5-8, 192)

### ► ALI HIGHSMITH

OLB, LSU (5-11, 229)

### ► ROBERT JAMES

OLB, Arizona State (5-10, 216)

### ► CURTIS LOFTON

ILB, Oklahoma (6-0, 245)

### ► RAY RICE

RB, Rutgers (5-9, 200)

### ► EDDIE ROYAL

WR, Virginia Tech (5-9, 182)

### ► PAUL SMITH

QB, Tulsa (6-1, 195)

### ► DeJUAN TRIBBLE

CB, Boston College (5-8, 190)

### ► JONATHAN WILHAMS

CB, Auburn (5-9, 183)

### ► JACK WILLIAMS

CB, Kent State (5-9, 186)



## TOP RETURN MEN

Every team would love to have a player like Devin Hester who can change the game by just stepping on the field. Here's our list of the top 10 kickoff/punt returners in this year's draft:

### 1 MIKEY HENDERSON

WR, Georgia

### 2 DeSEAN JACKSON

WR, California

### 3 EDDIE ROYAL

WR, Virginia Tech

### 4 DARRELL BLACKMAN

WR, N.C. State

### 5 LEODIS McKELVIN

CB, Troy

### 6 CHRIS JOHNSON

RB, East Carolina

### 7 TOM ZBIKOWSKI

S, Notre Dame

### 8 JORDY NELSON

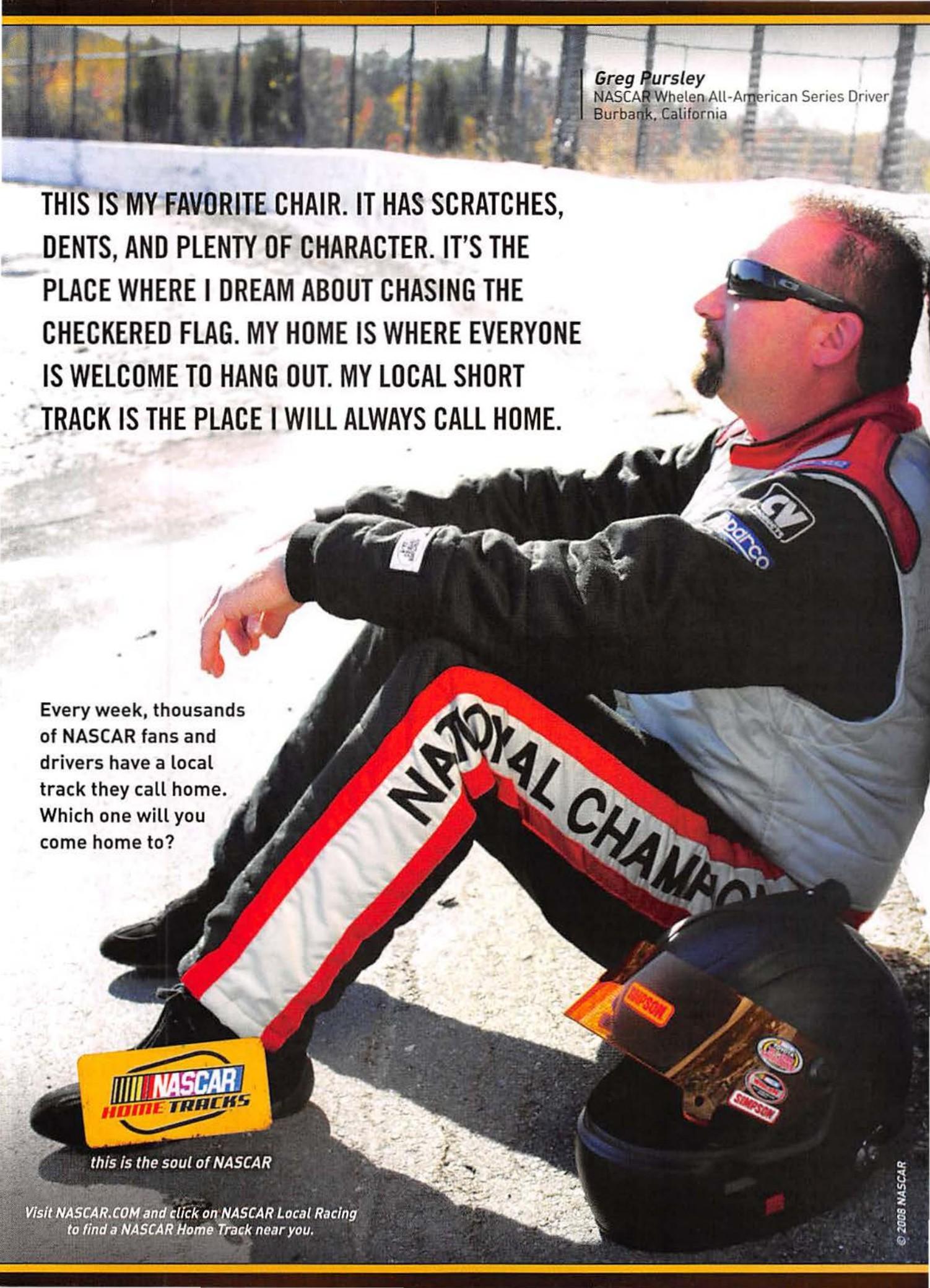
WR, Kansas State

### 9 FELIX JONES

RB, Arkansas

### 10 AQIB TALIB

CB, Kansas



**Greg Pursley**  
NASCAR Whelen All-American Series Driver  
Burbank, California

THIS IS MY FAVORITE CHAIR. IT HAS SCRATCHES, DENTS, AND PLENTY OF CHARACTER. IT'S THE PLACE WHERE I DREAM ABOUT CHASING THE CHECKERED FLAG. MY HOME IS WHERE EVERYONE IS WELCOME TO HANG OUT. MY LOCAL SHORT TRACK IS THE PLACE I WILL ALWAYS CALL HOME.

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# WHO'S

**I**t's hard to predict who will be chosen first overall in this year's draft, as no player stands head and shoulders above the rest. The guessing has become even more difficult now that the team with the top pick, Miami, has a new head coach (Tony Sparano), general manager (Jeff Ireland) and vice president of football operations (Bill Parcells).

While there are a number of players who could go No. 1—including quarterbacks Brian Brohm and Matt Ryan, running back Darren McFadden, defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey and defensive end Chris Long—look for the Dolphins to go with Long, if they stay at the top of the draft.

Long is not as explosive off the ball as Dorsey, but has the height, long arms and weight potential that are ideal for the 3-4 defense that Parcells will likely institute. Long played in a similar defense at Virginia for coach Al Groh (who previously worked under Parcells), and was productive at all three defensive-line positions. When adding in his pedigree (he's the son of NFL Hall-of-Famer Howie Long), athleticism, competitiveness and instincts, Long is the safest pick and will fill a position of dire need for the Dolphins, who can't afford to miss on this selection.

The belief is that Miami's first choice would be to trade down to pick somewhere between fourth and 10th, but to pull that off the Dolphins would most likely have to take a little less in value on the "trade chart" that teams follow so devoutly.

Both Brohm and Ryan make a good case to be the top selection because getting a quality starting quarterback is paramount to winning in the NFL. However, the Dolphins used a high second-round pick on John Beck last year, so they would be throwing that selection away by choosing another signal-caller early.

McFadden, who is regarded by many as the top prospect in the draft, doesn't fill an immediate need as long as Miami's medical staff believes that Ronnie Brown will return to his pre-injury form. He has already proven he can be a solid starting running back in the NFL. While

**With needs across the board, Miami could go in a number of directions with the top pick (including a trade)—but War Room scouts peg Chris Long as the best player for the Dolphins**

McFadden is an elite running-back prospect in our scouts' eyes, there are questions about whether he can handle a full load of touches. In any case, McFadden will likely need a year or two to increase his durability.

Without question, Dorsey is the most explosive of the defensive linemen and has a chance to be an elite interior force who consistently blows plays up. However, his value to the Dolphins depends on what defensive system they plan to run. If Miami goes with the traditional 4-3 that has two defensive tackles, then Dorsey should be the top selection, as he will start early in his career and become an elite tackle who consistently disrupts the opposing offense with his ability to consistently split the gaps and get backfield penetration.

However, if Parcells implements the 3-4 he has used just about everywhere he's been in the NFL, then Dorsey does not fit what Miami wants in a defensive lineman. Parcells' 3-4 scheme requires the nose tackle to be at least 6-2 and in the 350-pound range. Dorsey measures just under the ideal height and played at around 300 pounds in 2007.

Even though the Dolphins will certainly listen to all trade offers, odds are nothing will be enough to make them move out of the No. 1 spot. In that case, Miami will take Long and immediately implement him in the new defense.



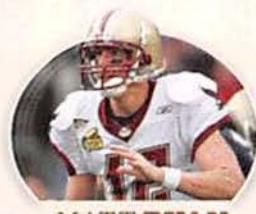
DARREN McFADDEN



BRIAN BROHM

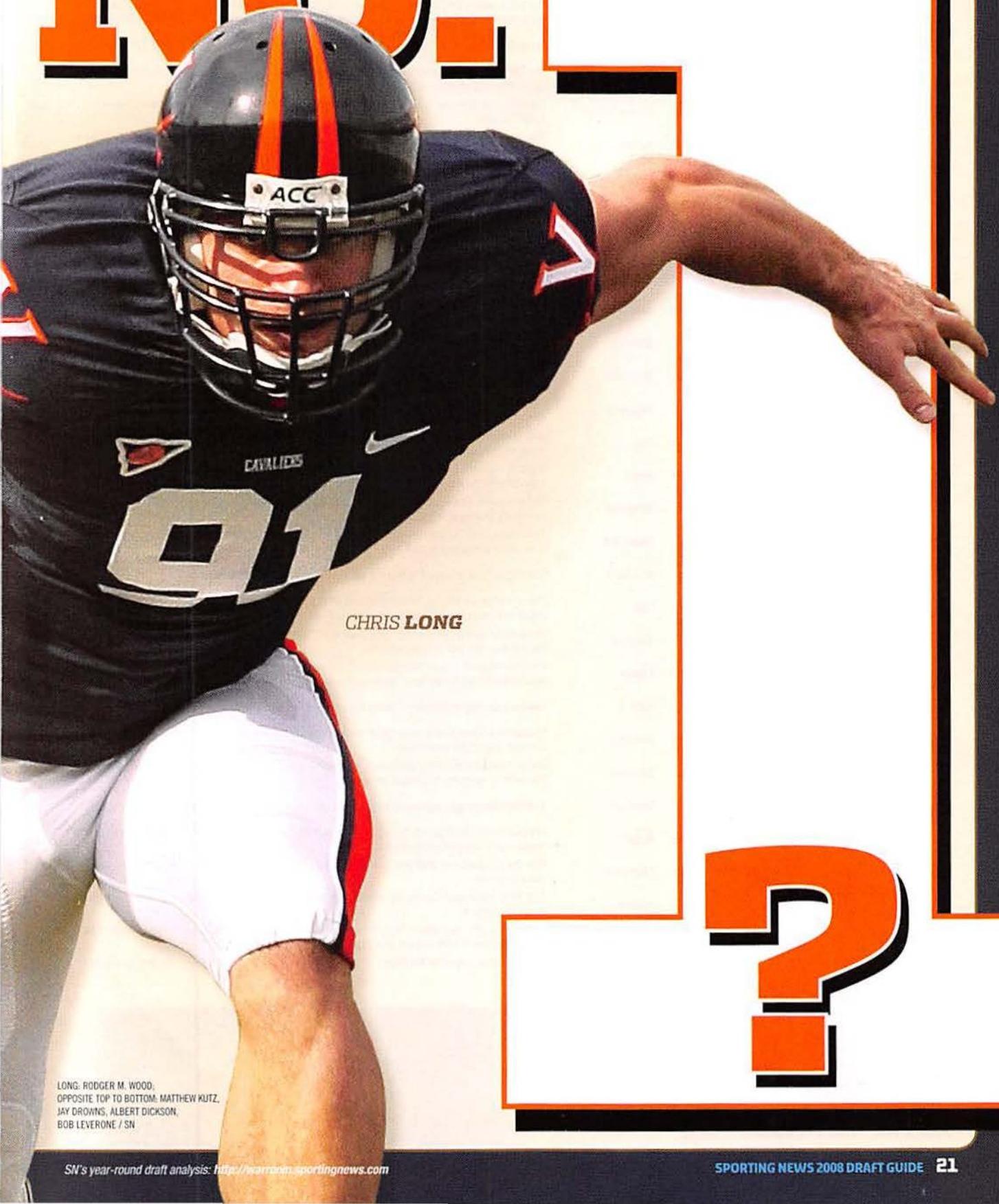


GLENN DORSEY



MATT RYAN

# NO. 5



CHRIS LONG

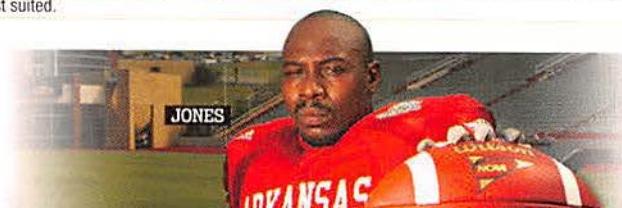
# ?

LONG: RODGER M. WOOD.  
OPPOSITE TOP TO BOTTOM: MATTHEW KUTZ,  
JAY DROWNS, ALBERT DICKSON,  
BOB LEVERONE / SN

# First round



PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	POS	COLLEGE	COMMENTS
1	Miami	Chris Long	DE	Virginia	If the Dolphins can't trade down, they will take the most polished player in the draft who fits perfectly in the 3-4 defense.
2	St. Louis	Ryan Clady*	OT	Boise State	The Rams really want Long, and if he's gone, they could trade down. However, no one in their front office will likely have the courage to do so and deal with the heat, so they'll likely stay put for O-line help.
3	Oakland **	Glenn Dorsey	DT	LSU	Some rate Dorsey as the top player in the draft, and the Raiders need a replacement for Warren Sapp.
4	Atlanta **	Darren McFadden*	RB	Arkansas	The Falcons could also grab a quarterback, but will be hard-pressed to pass up McFadden and his game-changing abilities. New G.M. Thomas Dimitroff is also looking to trade down.
5	Kansas City **	Matt Ryan	QB	Boston College	Despite what they say, the Chiefs are unsure about Brodie Croyle as their long-term answer behind center.
6	N.Y. Jets	Quentin Groves	OLB	Auburn	The Jets have struggled to pressure the quarterback since coach Eric Mangini's arrival, and Groves has all the physical tools to be an impact pass rusher in the NFL.
7	New England (from San Francisco)	Mike Jenkins	CB	South Florida	With Asante Samuel likely to leave via free agency, the Patriots will reload with the best corner in this year's draft.
8	Baltimore	Brian Brohm	QB	Louisville	Brohm is extremely polished and should be able to step in and start as a rookie, which the Ravens desperately need him to do.
9	Cincinnati	Sedrick Ellis	DT	USC	The Bengals need help up front, and Ellis brings the ability to consistently make impact plays against the run and rushing the quarterback.
10	New Orleans	Keith Rivers	OLB	USC	The Saints would prefer a cornerback, but no corner left is rated this high. Instead, Rivers will upgrade their defensive speed in the middle.
11	Buffalo	Malcolm Kelly*	WR	Oklahoma	Even with Early Doucet still on the board, the Bills would prefer the bigger Kelly to pair with speedster Lee Evans.
12	Denver	Jake Long	OT	Michigan	Even though Long doesn't fit the Broncos' typical offensive-lineman profile, it will be tough to pass on him here.
13	Carolina	Calais Campbell*	DE	Miami (Fla.)	With offensive tackle not as much of a need anymore, the Panthers will grab Campbell to possibly replace Mike Rucker.
14	Chicago	Jeff Otah	OT	Pittsburgh	The Bears badly need offensive-line help and get a huge tackle who has natural athleticism and could be special down the road.
15	Detroit	Leodis McKelvin	CB	Troy	With great size and competitiveness, McKelvin could immediately come in to aid the struggling Lions' secondary.
16	Arizona	Rashard Mendenhall*	RB	Illinois	Edgerrin James is slowing down and approaching 30, and Mendenhall is an instant-impact power runner.
17	Minnesota	Chris Williams	OT	Vanderbilt	Williams could step in as a rookie and solidify the Vikings' right side of the line before eventually moving to left tackle.
18	Houston	Kenny Phillips*	S	Miami (Fla.)	The Texans need help at cornerback as well, but don't want to miss out on the best safety in this year's draft.
19	Philadelphia	DaJuan Morgan*	S	N.C. State	The Eagles have struggled to find a good safety to pair with Brian Dawkins.
20	Tampa Bay	Early Doucet	WR	LSU	This is a small gamble, as Doucet struggled through an injury-plagued senior season, but the Bucs need someone to complement Joey Galloway.
21	Washington	Phillip Merling*	DE	Clemson	Merling can provide a consistent pass rush in addition to playing both the left and right side at defensive end.
22	Dallas (from Cleveland)	Andre Caldwell	WR	Florida	The Cowboys will debate between cornerback and receiver, but Caldwell's big Senior Bowl showing should solve the argument.
23	Pittsburgh	Pat Sims	DT	Auburn	Sims will provide an infusion of youth and energy to an aging defensive line.
24	Tennessee	DeSean Jackson*	WR	California	Quarterback Vince Young desperately needs weapons and will get one of the best in Jackson, who can also impact the return game.
25	Seattle	Felix Jones*	RB	Arkansas	Shaun Alexander is not the same back he once was, so the Seahawks bring in a home-run hitter in the running, receiving and return game.
26	Jacksonville	Mario Manningham*	WR	Michigan	Manningham's tough, aggressive playing style will allow Jacksonville's offense to take the next step.
27	San Diego	Ray Rice*	RB	Rutgers	With LaDainian Tomlinson turning 29 in June and Michael Turner likely out the door as a free agent, the Chargers will go for running-back depth.
28	Dallas	Reggie Smith*	CB	Oklahoma	Now the Cowboys can draft their corner, as Smith should start early in his career and could even move to safety.
29	San Francisco (from Indianapolis)	Donnie Avery	WR	Houston	With Mike Martz now running the offense, the 49ers need an explosive weapon, a description that Avery fits perfectly.
30	Green Bay	Martellus Bennett*	TE	Texas A&M	Once a strength, the Packers' tight ends haven't been as productive in recent years. Bennett is the best in this year's draft and will give Brett Favre another solid target.
31	N.Y. Giants	Curtis Lofton*	LB	Oklahoma	Drafting Lofton will allow the Giants to move Mathias Kiwanuka back to defensive end, where he's best suited.



\*Underclassman. \*\*Order to be determined by coin flip.

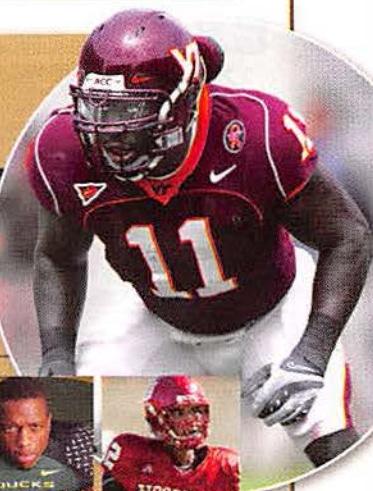
# Other views

*Sporting News* writers Clifton Brown and Matt Hayes offer their perspectives on how the first round of the draft will pan out:

	Brown	Hayes
1	OAKLAND Chris Long, DE, Virginia	MIAMI Glenn Dorsey, DT, LSU
2	ATLANTA (moving up after a trade with St. Louis) Matt Ryan, QB, Boston College	ST. LOUIS Ryan Clady, OT, Boise State
3	OAKLAND Glenn Dorsey, DT, LSU	OAKLAND Chris Long, DE, Virginia
4	ST. LOUIS (moving down after a trade with Atlanta) Ryan Clady, OT, Boise State	ATLANTA Matt Ryan, QB, Boston College
5	KANSAS CITY Jake Long, OT, Michigan	KANSAS CITY Brian Brohm, QB, Louisville
6	N.Y. JETS Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas	N.Y. JETS Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas
7	NEW ENGLAND Leodis McKelvin, CB, Troy	NEW ENGLAND Sedrick Ellis, DT, USC
8	BALTIMORE Brian Brohm, QB, Louisville	BALTIMORE Jake Long, OT, Michigan
9	CINCINNATI Sedrick Ellis, DT, USC	CINCINNATI Quentin Groves, LB, Auburn
10	NEW ORLEANS Mike Jenkins, CB, South Florida	NEW ORLEANS Pat Sims, DT, Auburn
11	BUFFALO DeSean Jackson, WR, California	BUFFALO Mike Jenkins, CB, South Florida
12	DENVER Chris Williams, OT, Vanderbilt	DENVER Chris Williams, OT, Vanderbilt
13	CAROLINA Malcolm Kelly, WR, Oklahoma	CAROLINA Kenny Phillips, S, Miami (Fla.)
14	CHICAGO Jonathan Stewart, RB, Oregon	CHICAGO Keith Rivers, LB, USC
15	DETROIT Jeff Otah, OT, Pittsburgh	DETROIT Tony Hills, OT, Texas
16	ARIZONA Vernon Gholston, DE, Ohio State	ARIZONA Rashard Mendenhall, RB, Illinois
17	MINNESOTA Derrick Harvey, DE, Florida	MINNESOTA Early Doucet, WR, LSU
18	HOUSTON Rashard Mendenhall, RB, Illinois	HOUSTON Felix Jones, RB, Arkansas
19	PHILADELPHIA Quentin Groves, LB, Auburn	PHILADELPHIA Leodis McKelvin, CB, Troy
20	TAMPA BAY Keith Rivers, LB, USC	TAMPA BAY Antoine Cason, CB, Arizona
21	WASHINGTON Calais Campbell, DE, Miami (Fla.)	WASHINGTON Calais Campbell, DE, Miami (Fla.)
22	DALLAS Aqib Talib, CB, Kansas	DALLAS Malcolm Kelly, WR, Oklahoma
23	PITTSBURGH Ray Rice, RB, Rutgers	PITTSBURGH Vernon Gholston, DE, Ohio State

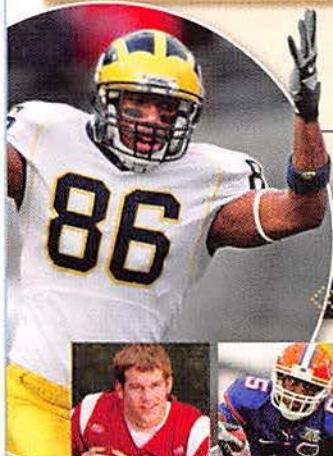
## Matt Hayes' most underrated players

1. Xavier Adibi, LB, Virginia Tech
2. Philip Wheeler, LB, Georgia Tech
3. Martin Rucker, TE, Missouri
4. Jonathan Stewart, RB, Oregon
5. James Hardy, WR, Indiana



## Matt Hayes' most overrated players

1. Brian Brohm, QB, Louisville
2. Andre Caldwell, WR, Florida
3. DeSean Jackson, WR, California
4. Joe Flacco, QB, Delaware
5. Mario Manningham, WR, Michigan

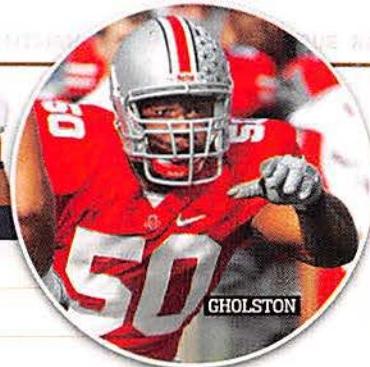


	Brown	Hayes
24	TENNESSEE Antoine Cason, CB, Arizona	TENNESSEE Andre Caldwell, WR, Florida
25	SEATTLE Sam Baker, OT, USC	SEATTLE Ray Rice, RB, Rutgers
26	JACKSONVILLE Kenny Phillips, S, Miami (Fla.)	JACKSONVILLE Lawrence Jackson, DE, USC
27	SAN DIEGO Felix Jones, RB, Arkansas	SAN DIEGO Jeff Otah, OT, Pittsburgh
28	DALLAS Mario Manningham, WR, Michigan	DALLAS Curtis Lofton, LB, Oklahoma
29	SAN FRANCISCO Lawrence Jackson, DE, USC	SAN FRANCISCO DeSean Jackson, WR, California
30	GREEN BAY DaJuan Morgan, S, N.C. State	GREEN BAY Martellus Bennett, TE, Texas A&M
31	N.Y. GIANTS Pat Sims, DT, Auburn	N.Y. GIANTS Derrick Harvey, DE, Florida

—Clifton Brown covers the NFL and Matt Hayes writes about college football for *Sporting News* weekly.

# Second round

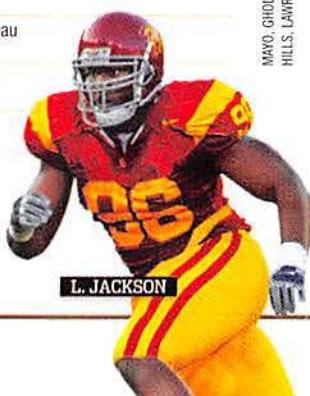
MAYO



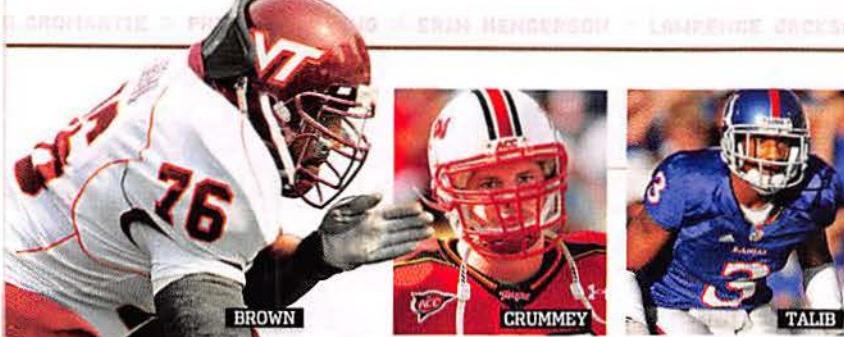
PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	POS	COLLEGE	COMMENTS
32	Miami	Beau Bell	ILB	UNLV	The Dolphins need someone to replace the recently released Zach Thomas.
33	St. Louis	Vernon Gholston*	DE	Ohio State	With Gholston opposite Leonard Little, the Rams' defensive line will increase its sacks and tackles for loss.
34	Atlanta **	John Greco	G	Toledo	The Falcons need a serious offensive-line upgrade, and Greco can play both guard and tackle.
35	Kansas City **	Brandon Flowers*	CB	Virginia Tech	With Ty Law and Patrick Surtain nearing the end of their careers, the Chiefs need to begin looking toward the future.
36	N.Y. Jets	Ahtyba Rubin	DT	Iowa State	Rubin will provide a true nose tackle for the Jets, whose 3-4 defense has lacked one in recent years.
37	Oakland **	Tony Hills	OT	Texas	Although it improved in 2007, the Raiders' O-line still needs help, and Hills could start at right tackle immediately if needed.
38	Baltimore	Antoine Cason	CB	Arizona	Cason will join an already-strong Ravens secondary and have the opportunity to shine opposite Chris McAlister.
39	San Francisco	Jerod Mayo*	ILB	Tennessee	Pairing Mayo with 2007 NFL Defensive Rookie of the Year Patrick Willis will give the 49ers one of the best linebacker units in the NFC.
40	New Orleans	DeJuan Tribble	CB	Boston College	The free-agent signing of Jason David isn't working out, so the Saints will go for an athletic corner who can play immediately.
41	Buffalo	Terrell Thomas	CB	USC	The Bills sorely missed Nate Clements last season, and need to get more aggressive in the secondary.
42	Denver	Devin Thomas*	WR	Michigan State	Thomas will provide a nice complement for emerging Brandon Marshall. The selection would also signal that Javon Walker's days in Denver are close to done.
43	Carolina	Jonathan Stewart*	RB	Oregon	Stewart is a bruising back, something the Panthers haven't had since the Stephen Davis era.
44	Chicago	Lawrence Jackson	DE	USC	The Bears come into the draft looking to upgrade both sides of the line and complete the task by nabbing the athletic Jackson with their second pick.
45	Detroit	Jordon Dizon	OLB	Colorado	Dizon, who has the speed to chase down any ballcarrier, fits the Lions' defensive style perfectly.
46	Cincinnati	Derrick Harvey*	DE	Florida	Defense continues to be the theme for the Bengals, and Harvey is an elite pass rusher.
47	Minnesota	Limas Sweed	WR	Texas	Sweed's wrist injury will scare some teams off, but the Vikings will eventually feel lucky that this future starter slipped to Round 2.
48	Atlanta <i>(from Houston)</i>	Joe Flacco	QB	Delaware	After catching heat for passing on Ryan and Brohm in the first round, the Falcons will nab a gem in Flacco. Don't be surprised if he starts at some point in 2008.
49	Philadelphia	Gosder Cherilus	OT	Boston College	This pick would be an admission that 2006 second-round selection Winston Justice is a huge bust, and the Eagles need depth to eventually replace Jon Runyan and William Thomas.
50	Arizona	Chevis Jackson	CB	LSU	The Cardinals have struggled to find productive starting cornerbacks, and Jackson could challenge Antrel Rolle for the starting job as a rookie.
51	Washington	Harry Douglas	WR	Louisville	The Redskins want to implement a West Coast-style offense. To do so, they need an elusive receiver like Douglas.
52	Tampa Bay	Chris Johnson	RB	East Carolina	With Cadillac Williams' career in doubt due to a knee injury last year, the Bucs will grab the versatile Johnson, who will contribute early in his career.
53	Pittsburgh	Ezra Butler	ILB	Nevada	The Steelers' linebackers aren't what they once were, and Butler has the size and strength to make immediate contributions.
54	Tennessee	Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie	CB	Tennessee State	The Titans will continue their recent history of drafting cornerbacks who work out extremely well but were not consistently good players on the field in college.
55	Seattle	Fred Davis	TE	USC	Seahawks coach Mike Holmgren will hope he has a star in Davis, who won the John Mackey Award as the nation's top tight end in 2007.
56	Cleveland	Kevin Smith*	RB	Central Florida	The Browns will be desperate for a defensive lineman here, but with no elite options they'll go for Smith and groom him to be Jamal Lewis' eventual replacement.
57	Miami <i>(from San Diego)</i>	King Dunlap	OT	Auburn	Even though Dunlap had a terrible senior season, the Dolphins are willing to gamble, considering the serious help needed on their offensive line.
58	Jacksonville	Chris Ellis	DE	Virginia Tech	The Jaguars will get a pass rusher who fits with their type of all-out defensive style.
59	Indianapolis	Marcus Harrison	DT	Arkansas	The Colts are lacking in this area, and Harrison has strength and athleticism.
60	Green Bay	Shawn Murphy	G	Utah State	Three players rotated between two positions all of last year for the Packers, who will look to solidify the interior line.
61	Dallas	Jamaal Charles*	RB	Texas	With Julius Jones likely to leave in free agency, Charles will become the new partner for Marion Barber.
62	New England	Dan Connor	ILB	Penn State	Connor will learn under the aging duo of Tedy Bruschi and Junior Seau before becoming a starter in 2009.
63	N.Y. Giants	Thomas DeCoud	S	California	The Giants' play at safety was inconsistent in 2007. DeCoud has the physical tools to be very good against the run and pass.

\*Underclassman.

\*\*Order to be determined by coin flip.



MAYO, GHOLSTON: BOB LEVERONE / SN; CONNOR: PAUL NISLEY / SN; HILLS: LAWRENCE JACKSON: ROBERT SEALE / SN; TRIBBLE: ALBERT DICKSON / SN



BROWN

CRUMMEY

TALIB

# Third round

PICK	TEAM	PLAYER	POS	COLLEGE	COMMENTS
64	Miami	Jordy Nelson	WR	Kansas State	After grabbing the speedy Ted Ginn Jr. at No. 9 overall last season, the Dolphins will draft a tall wideout to eventually pair with him.
65	St. Louis	Xavier Adibi	OLB	Virginia Tech	Adibi will give the Rams a fast linebacker who can chase plays down and is also good in pass coverage.
66	Kansas City **	Branden Albert*	G	Virginia	Albert will add to the Chiefs' fast offensive line, and should start as a rookie.
67	N.Y. Jets	Sam Baker	OT	USC	The Jets will hope Baker is the solution to their problem at right tackle.
68	Atlanta **	Andre Fluellen	DT	Florida State	Despite being undersized, Fluellen had a productive career at Florida State and will give the Falcons help up front.
69	New England (from Oakland) **	Red Bryant	DT	Texas A&M	The Patriots will make their usual surprise pick, thinking ahead two years.
70	San Francisco	Letroy Guion*	DT	Florida State	Guion has the height, athleticism and versatility the 49ers crave in their defensive linemen.
71	Buffalo (from Baltimore)	Martin Rucker	TE	Missouri	Quarterback Trent Edwards needs all the weapons he can get, and Rucker is a solid target who can make plays.
72	Buffalo	DeMario Pressley	DT	N.C. State	With two picks in a row, the Bills will go for an athletic defensive tackle with immediate starting talent.
73	Minnesota (from Denver)	Darrell Robertson	DE	Georgia Tech	The Vikings' defensive-end situation is up in the air with Kenechi Udeze battling leukemia and Erasmus James rehabbing from a knee injury. Robertson could have to contribute faster than expected.
74	Carolina	Vince Hall	ILB	Virginia Tech	With Dan Morgan recently released, the Panthers will grab the vastly underrated Hall, and could move him outside to pair with Jon Beason and Na'il Diggs.
75	Chicago	Philip Wheeler	ILB	Georgia Tech	The Bears need some competition at the starting middle spot, as Lance Briggs likely won't be back this season.
76	Detroit	Duane Brown	OT	Virginia Tech	The Lions have been disappointed with the play of left tackle Jeff Backus. Brown has the athleticism to eventually take his place and could start at right tackle in the interim.
77	Cincinnati	Tashard Choice	RB	Georgia Tech	Rudi Johnson is getting older and Kenny Irons is coming off a torn ACL, so the Bengals will bolster their running game with the versatile Choice.
78	New Orleans	Eddie Royal	WR	Virginia Tech	Royal gives the Saints a solid slot receiver who will also make big plays as a return man.
79	Houston	James Hardy*	WR	Indiana	Even with an established star in Andre Johnson and a budding one in Jacoby Jones, the Texans will find it hard to pass on the dynamic Hardy.
80	Philadelphia	Aqib Talib*	CB	Kansas	The Eagles' second pick in the secondary in three rounds would show they're heading toward a youth movement there.
81	Arizona	Jeremy Geathers*	DE	UNLV	Geathers has the explosiveness and athleticism to bolster the Cardinals' pass rush.
82	Minnesota	Barry Booker	DT	Virginia Tech	The Vikings will continue to solidify their future defensive line with a second pick in this round.
83	Tampa Bay	Kellen Davis	TE	Michigan State	While the Buccaneers aren't desperate for a tight end, Davis has first-round talent and is worth the gamble in Round 3.
84	Washington	Chad Rinehart	OT	Northern Iowa	The Redskins' offensive line needs some youth, especially on the right side, and Rinehart can start at either tackle or guard in time.
85	Tennessee	Brad Cottam	TE	Tennessee	After grabbing a receiver in the first round, the Titans will continue to stock their offense with targets for Vince Young.
86	Seattle	Carl Nicks	G	Nebraska	Despite the recent signing of Mike Wahle, the Seahawks need all the help at guard they can get.
87	Cleveland	Lavelle Hawkins	WR	California	In pairing Hawkins with Braylon Edwards and Kellen Winslow, the Browns will hope to finally have the offensive weapons to break into the playoffs.
88	Pittsburgh	Chilo Rachal*	G	USC	The Steelers need to bring some youth to their offensive line, and Rachal is an athletic and competitive blocker with a lot of upside.
89	Jacksonville	Jonathan Hefney	S	Tennessee	Even with 2007 first-round pick Reggie Nelson already developing into a productive player, Hefney is too good for the Jaguars to pass on here.
90	Chicago (from San Diego)	Andrew Crumme	G	Maryland	The Bears will continue a full upgrade up front by grabbing their second offensive lineman in the first three rounds.
91	Green Bay	Tracy Porter	CB	Indiana	The Packers already have two elite starting cornerbacks, but the chance to draft the athletic Porter here is too good to pass up.
92	Dallas	Geno Hayes	OLB	Florida State	Hayes is an ideal fit for Wade Phillips' aggressive 3-4 defense with his playing speed and explosive closing ability.
93	Indianapolis	Mike Hart	RB	Michigan	Despite concerns about his size, Hart will give the Colts an excellent backup to Joseph Addai.
94	New England	Jermichael Finley*	TE	Texas	The Patriots will take another chance here, gambling that they can turn the speedy Finley into the receiving threat he has the talent to become.
95	N.Y. Giants	Jonathan Wilhite	CB	Auburn	The Giants will continue to improve their secondary by grabbing Wilhite, who really impressed scouts at the East-West Shrine Game.

BROWN, CRUMMEY, CHOICE: BOB LEVERONE / SN; TALIB: ALBERT DICKSON / SN

\*Underclassman. \*\*Order to be determined by coin flip.

# STACKING the BOARD

ROUND

**QB**

**RB**

**FB**

**WR**

**TE**

**OT**

**OG**

**1**

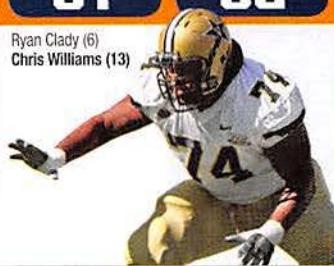
Brian Brohm (5)  
Matt Ryan (11)  
Joe Flacco (25)

Darren McFadden (4)  
Rashard Mendenhall (8)  
Felix Jones (12)  
Ray Rice (14)



Early Doucet (7)  
Malcolm Kelly (9)  
Andre Caldwell (15)  
DeSean Jackson (18)  
Mario Manningham (21)  
Devin Thomas (24)

Ryan Clady (6)  
Chris Williams (13)



**2**

Jonathan Stewart (29)  
Kevin Smith (32)  
Chris Johnson (36)

Donnie Avery (27)  
Harry Douglas (48)

Martellus Bennett (38)

Jake Long (26)  
Tony Hills (37)  
Jeff Otah (44)  
King Dunlap (50)

John Greco (39)

**3**



Jamaal Charles (52)  
Tashard Choice (67)  
**Mike Hart (71)**  
Matt Forte (73)  
Anthony Alridge (85)  
Thomas Brown (98)

Peyton Hillis (90)

Limas Sweed (53)  
Jordy Nelson (57)  
James Hardy (61)  
Eddie Royal (68)  
Lavelle Hawkins (74)  
Earl Bennett (84)  
Adarius Bowman (86)  
Dexter Jackson (99)  
Darius Reynaud (101)  
Jerome Simpson (104)  
Mark Bradford (107)

Martin Rucker (58)  
Brad Cottam (77)  
Kellen Davis (88)  
Jermichael Finley (95)

Gosder Cherilus (76)  
Duane Brown (78)  
Chad Rinehart (81)  
Sam Baker (96)

Shawn Murphy (72)  
Branden Albert (75)  
Chilo Rachal (97)  
Carl Nicks (100)

**4**

Colt Brennan (119)  
Erik Ainge (132)  
John David Booty (138)  
Chad Henne (140)  
Paul Smith (145)  
André Woodson (158)

Xavier Omon (121)  
Yvenson Bernard (151)

Owen Schmitt (110)  
Jerome Felton (136)

Maurice Purify (111)  
Kevin Robinson (115)  
Keenan Burton (120)  
Marcus Henry (144)  
Darrell Blackman (148)  
John Dunlap (150)  
Will Franklin (153)  
D.J. Hall (156)  
Paul Hubbard (159)  
Darnell Jenkins (160)  
Marcus Monk (161)  
Mikey Henderson (170)

Joe Jon Finley (114)  
Dustin Keller (122)  
Fred Davis (131)  
Joey Haynos (139)  
Craig Stevens (141)  
Mike Peterson (155)

Franklin Dunbar (116)  
Oniel Cousins (154)  
Corey Clark (157)

Andrew Crumney (113)  
Mike McGlynn (124)  
Eric Young (142)  
Heath Benedict (146)

**5**

Steve Slaton (173)  
Justin Forsett (176)  
Keon Lattimore (180)  
Marcus Thomas (212)  
Tony Temple (215)  
Dantrill Savage (225)  
Janmar Brittingham (229)  
Chauncey Washington (232)  
Amir Pinnix (235)  
BenJarvus Green-Ellis (237)  
Rafael Little (239)

Mike Cox (175)

Taj Smith (174)  
Dorien Bryant (178)  
Gary Banks (181)  
Jason Rivers (184)  
Sammie Stroughter (190)  
Emie Wheelwright (213)  
Davone Bess (220)  
Mario Urrutia (228)

Adam Bishop (166)

Anthony Collins (210)  
Akim Millington (221)

Jeremy Zuttah (167)  
David Hale (171)  
Chris McDuffie (179)  
Roy Schuening (182)  
Robert Felton (188)  
Pedro Sosa (189)  
Mike Gibson (195)  
Dan Gore (197)  
Drew Radovich (219)

**6**

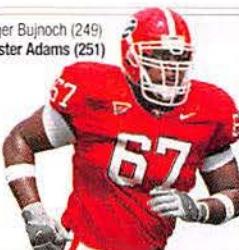
Sam Keller (246)

Jehuu Caulcrick (240)

Ryan Grice-Mullen (243)  
Arman Shields (247)

Jonathan Stupar (248)

Digger Bujnoch (249)  
Chester Adams (251)



**7**

Josh Johnson (290)  
Anthony Morelli (303)  
Alex Brink (305)  
Matt Flynn (309)  
Luke Drone (311)

Allen Patrick (262)  
Cory Boyd (291)

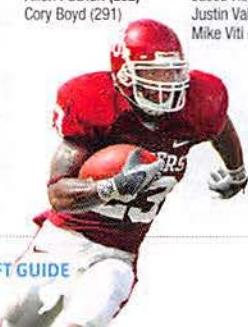
Jacob Hester (256)  
Justin Valentine (289)  
Mike Viti (310)

Todd Blythe (258)  
Adrian Arrington (266)  
Travis Brown (270)  
Justin Harper (274)  
Kenneth Moore (285)  
Danny Amendola (296)  
Lance Leggett (302)  
Brian Paysinger (307)  
De'Cody Fagg (312)  
Evan Moore (316)  
Wynont Jackson (321)  
Luke Swan (329)

J.B. Phillips (264)  
Tom Santi (292)  
Derek Fine (313)

Josh Sitton (268)  
Brian Stamper (280)  
Stephen Sene (294)  
Shannon Boatman (308)

Barry Richardson (267)  
Adam Kraus (279)  
Devin Clark (293)  
Josh Coffman (314)  
Edwin Harrison (326)  
Ryan Wendell (327)



**War Room scouts** show, round by round, where each player should be drafted based solely on his value. The number in parentheses represents the player's overall ranking among all prospects, regardless of position. Those numbers sometimes do not fall into the corresponding rounds because of the overall strength of the draft.

C	DE	DT	ILB	OLB	CB	S	ST
---	----	----	-----	-----	----	---	----

Chris Long (1)  
Calais Campbell (17)

Glenn Dorsey (2)  
Sedrick Ellis (16)

Beau Bell (20)

Keith Rivers (3)

Mike Jenkins (10)

Kenny Phillips (19)  
DaJuan Morgan (23)



Philip Merling (34)  
Lawrence Jackson (45)  
Vernon Gholston (46)

Pat Sims (33)

Curtis Lofton (41)  
Jerod Mayo (43)  
Vince Hall (49)  
Phillip Wheeler (51)

Quentin Groves (28)  
Jordon Dizon (40)

Leodis McElvin (22)  
Brandon Flowers (30)  
Reggie Smith (31)  
Antoine Cason (35)  
DeJuan Tribble (42)  
Terrell Thomas (47)

Derrick Harvey (55)  
Jeremy Geathers (69)  
Chris Ellis (79)

Ahyba Rubin (54)  
Andre Fluellen (80)  
Marcus Harrison (82)  
Letroy Guion (92)  
Lionel Dotson (94)  
DeMario Pressley (102)

Ezra Butler (59)  
Tavares Gooden (87)

Xavier Adibi (60)  
Geno Hayes (63)  
Dan Connor (89)  
Erin Henderson (91)  
Alvin Bowen (103)  
Cliff Avril (105)

Jack Ikegwuonu (56)  
Chevis Jackson (65)  
Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie (66)  
Aqib Talib (70)  
Jonathan Wilhite (83)  
Patrick Lee (93)  
Justin King (106)

Thomas DeCoud (62)  
Jonathan Hefney (64)

John Sullivan (112)



Jason Jones (117)  
Darrell Robertson (125)  
Bryan Mattison (130)  
Titus Brown (143)

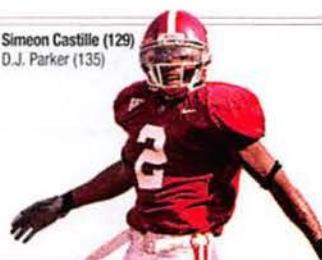
Barry Booker (109)  
Red Bryant (126)  
Frank Okam (147)  
Kentwan Balmer (152)

Jameel McClain (149)

Ali Highsmith (118)  
Robert James (123)  
LeRue Rumph (127)  
Bruce Davis (128)  
Gary Guyton (137)

Tracy Porter (108)  
Justin Tryon (133)  
Jack Williams (134)  
Zackary Bowman (162)

Simeon Castille (129)  
D.J. Parker (135)



Kory Lichtensteiger (177)  
Mike Pollak (201)  
Cody Wallace (216)  
Kyle Devan (224)

Jeremy Thompson (164)  
Chris Harrington (169)  
Wallace Gilberry (183)  
Johnny Dingle (202)  
Rob Jackson (204)  
Ken Iwebema (206)  
Tommy Blake (209)  
Eric Foster (214)

Dre Moore (163)  
Henry Smith (223)  
Teraz McCray (226)

Lamar Myles (168)  
Corey McKeon (192)  
Spencer Larsen (211)  
Jolonn Dunbar (227)

Derrick Doggett (185)  
David Vobora (186)  
Tramaine Billie (187)  
Stanford Keglar (191)  
Curtis Gatewood (230)  
Bo Ruud (250)

Dwight Lowery (165)  
Jonathan Zenon (196)  
Charles Godfrey (199)  
Leslie Majors (231)  
Terrence Wheatley (234)

Dennis Keyes (193)  
Quintin Demps (200)  
Jamar Adams (203)  
Dominique Barber (205)  
Craig Steltz (207)  
Marcus Griffin (208)  
Tony Joiner (217)  
Tom Zbikowski (233)

Brett Kern (194), P  
Taylor Mehlhaff (236), K  
Shane Longest (238), K

Steve Justice (241)

Carlton Powell (242)

J Leman (244)

Trae Williams (252)

Nehemiah Warrick (245)  
Tyrell Johnson (253)



Alex Boston (257)  
Chase Ortiz (261)  
Kendall Langford (263)  
Kurt Hout (271)  
Joe Clemond (272)  
Nick Schlekekey (282)  
Marque Fountain (295)  
Shawn Richardson (315)

Nick Hayden (260)  
Trevor Laws (283)  
George Chukwu (298)  
Jason Shirley (306)  
Keilen Dykes (317)  
Yaniv Barnett (325)

Rodrick Johnson (265)  
Dante Floyd (269)  
Jonathan Goff (273)  
Steve Octavien (284)  
Mike Humpal (297)  
Ben Moffit (318)

Marcus Howard (255)  
Bryan Kehl (275)  
Shawn Crable (286)  
Wesley Woodyard (287)  
Marcus Richardson (299)  
Brandon Renkert (304)  
Kelly Poppinga (319)  
Ryan Karl (323)

Wilrey Fontenot (259)  
D.J. Wolfe (281)  
Matterral Richardson (300)  
Kennard Cox (320)

Caleb Campbell (276)  
Henti Baird (277)  
Travis Key (278)  
Roger Williams (288)  
Kelin Johnson (301)  
Nate Lyles (322)  
Jamie Silva (324)  
Kevin Mitchell (328)

**NFL DRAFT TRACKER 2008**

NFL DRAFT TRACKER 2008

NFC WEST



### NFC SOUTH



NFC NORTH



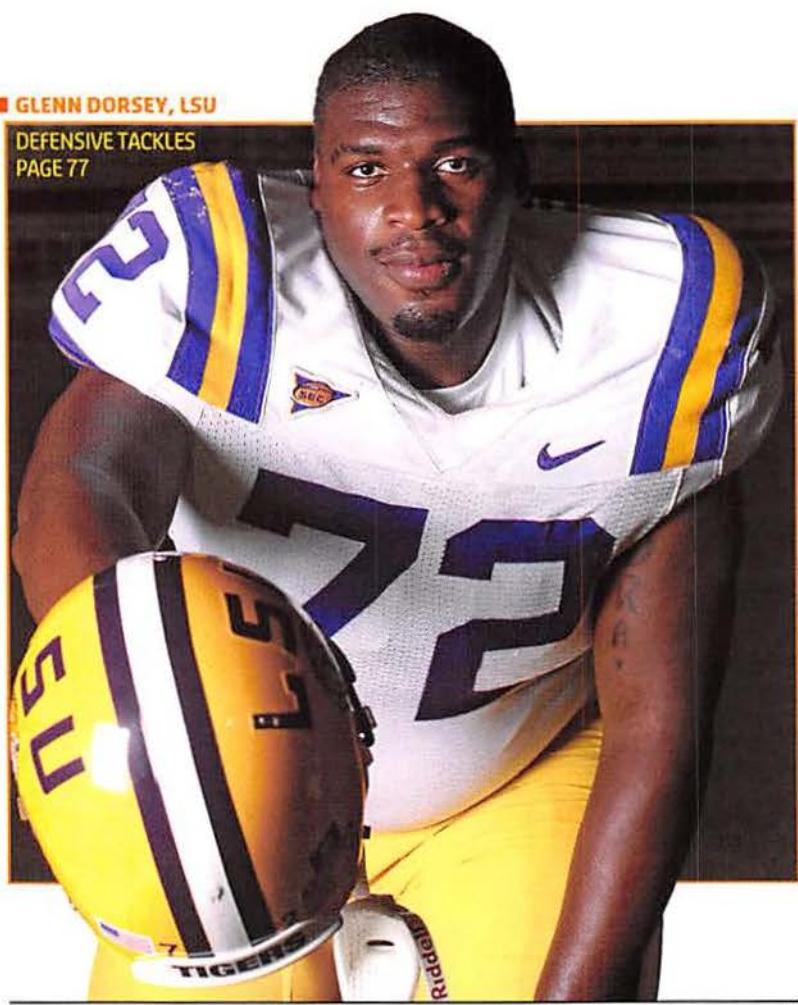
NFC EAST



GLENN DORSEY, LSU

DEFENSIVE TACKLES

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## ABOUT WAR ROOM SCOUTS

Football scouts attend games and practices, watch players on film and write reports on what they observe. It is in this manner that NFL teams determine which players to draft, sign as free agents and acquire trades. The scouting process is at the core of NFL roster management. None of the league's 32 scouting departments works for the *Sporting News*, but we have the next best thing: War Room scouts.

War Room scouts have worked at every level of college and pro football, from on-field coaching to NFL front-office management, and collectively account for more than 200 years of college and pro experience. They do everything their NFL counterparts do, but instead of internalizing this information, they write it for the general public. War Room scouts are dedicated to serving the hardcore football fan with thoughtful, in-depth analysis of NFL and college players, coaches and teams.

War Room scouts break down film of every NFL game, college game and individual footage of college prospects, and they attend training camp and games in person. This thorough evaluation makes possible the detailed analysis you find in War Room scouting reports on draft prospects, NFL veterans, game matchups and much more.

War Room scouts provide exclusive content for *Sporting News*' weekly magazine, yearbooks, Web site ([sportingnews.com](http://sportingnews.com)), Fantasy Source Web Site ([fantasygames.sportingnews.com](http://fantasygames.sportingnews.com)) and *Sporting News* Radio ([radio.sportingnews.com](http://radio.sportingnews.com)).

## POSITION REVIEWS

	C	CENTERS	68	
QB	32	DE	DEFENSIVE ENDS	71
RB	38	DT	DEFENSIVE TACKLES	77
FB	44	ILB	INSIDE LINEBACKERS	83
WR	46	OLB	OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS	88
TE	55	CB	CORNERBACKS	93
OT	59	S	SAFETIES	99
G	64	ST	SPECIALISTS	105

WAR ROOM SCOUTS'

## GRADING SYSTEM

### 9.0-8.5 FRANCHISE PLAYER

Demonstrates rare abilities and can create mismatches that have an obvious impact on the game. Is a premier college player who has all of the skills to take over a game and play at a championship level. Rates among the top two players in the nation at his position and is considered a top-10 overall draft prospect.

### 8.4-8.0 POTENTIAL PRO BOWL PLAYER

Has the ability to create mismatches against most opponents in the NFL. A featured player who has an impact on the outcome of the game. Cannot be shut down by a single player and plays on a consistent level each week. Rates among the top three at his position and is considered a solid first-round draft prospect.

### 7.9-7.0 EARLY-IMPACT PLAYER

Standout at the college level who is close to being an elite player and likely will start as a rookie. Has no glaring weaknesses and usually wins his individual matchup but does not dominate in every game, especially when going against the top players in the league. Usually rates among the top five players at his position and is considered a second-round draft prospect.

### 6.9-6.0 EARLY CONTRIBUTOR

Outstanding athlete with the potential to develop into a rookie starter. Has the physical tools to play the position but lacks some experience or polish and may need development time before he can start. Could start on special teams and might factor in on sub-packages. Usually ranks in the top third of players at his position and is considered a third-round draft prospect.

### 5.9-5.5 EVENTUAL STARTER

Gives a solid effort every week and has enough traits to develop, but still has weaknesses that will be exposed against top competition. Usually lacks something that keeps him from being considered a Day 1 pick, but still has special traits. For example, a player may have the size and skills to be an outstanding prospect, but lacks ideal speed. Usually rates in the top half of the players at his position and is considered a fourth-round pick.

### 5.4-4.5 QUALITY BACKUP

Usually plays at a high level in college, but lacks some measurables or skills to play at that same level in the NFL. He might have a lot of developmental qualities and might contribute right away on special teams or in a situational capacity. Usually rated in the second third of players at his position and is considered a fifth- or sixth-round draft choice.

### 4.4-4.0 CHANCE TO MAKE ROSTER

Has one or more skills sought by NFL teams, but lacks the full package in terms of NFL talent. Teams often take chances on a player who has character issues or a developmental-type athlete who falls into this grade range. Often, this is a player who comes from a smaller school or did not stand out at the college level. NFL teams are looking for diamonds in the rough with this type of prospect. He usually rates among the bottom third of players at his position and is considered a seventh-round draft choice or an undrafted free agent.

### 3.9-3.6 PRIORITY FREE AGENT

Lacks enough special traits to warrant a draftable grade, but is a good player with the necessary measurables and enough skills to compete in training camp. A long shot to make a roster; might win a practice squad spot.

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# QUARTERBACKS

**B**efore the start of the 2007 college football season, this draft class had so many well-known quarterback prospects that it was thought to rival the 1983 group, which had six signal-callers taken in the first round. After some inconsistent seasons and all-star-game struggles, however, only two quarterbacks now seem to be likely Round 1 selections. That number could climb to three depending on Delaware's Joe Flacco, who was not even considered a first-day prospect entering last season.

Louisville's Brian Brohm is the best of the quarterback prospects, but Boston College's Matt Ryan (who had an outstanding senior season) is right behind him. Who goes first will be determined by the specific needs of the teams atop the draft order.

Brohm has solid technique and footwork. His field awareness, intelligence and willingness to throw the ball away rather than forcing passes enhance the fact he has all the tools to be a productive starter.

Ryan struggled through a terrible junior season due to injury, but bounced back in 2007 by improving his footwork and technique, which increased his accuracy. While Brohm is somewhat of a reserved leader by example, Ryan is a vocal, take-charge type.

The most intriguing quarterback of this year's class is Flacco, who has an excellent arm and can make deep passes with outstanding velocity and accuracy.

A secondary group of signal-callers has shown the ability to be NFL starters, but will have to overcome deficiencies to make it. That list includes Kentucky's André Woodson, Michigan's Chad Henne, Tennessee's Erik Ainge, USC's John David Booty, Nebraska's Sam Keller and Hawaii's Colt Brennan.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-3	225	4.60
NFL Minimum	6-0	195	5.00

The transition continues from the big, immobile dropback passer to the player who can buy time with his athletic ability. But quarterbacks must still have the arm strength to throw the deep ball with velocity, the ability to throw to the sideline, the intelligence to recognize and exploit complex coverages and blitz schemes and the touch to get the ball between zones. Strong leadership and character are premiums.

## 2007 DRAFT QUARTERBACKS TAKEN: 10

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	2	3	1	0	2	1	1

**Brohm and Ryan rule the roost, but Flacco's flying up the board**



BRIAN BROHM

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 BRIAN BROHM ► LOUISVILLE

6-4 226 4.95	FINAL GRADE 8.4				
	COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP
2004	67.4%	819	6	2	8.36
2005	68.8%	2883	19	5	9.58
2006	63.6%	3049	16	5	9.74
2007	65.1%	4024	30	12	8.51

**NFL comparison:** Peyton Manning, Colts

**Arm strength:** Makes all the throws with zip and accuracy, but lacks a true rocket arm. His footwork, delivery and release are efficient, making his arm look stronger than it really is. Cannot make great downfield throws when unable to stride into them. **Grade: 8.5**

**Accuracy/delivery:** Has a compact and efficient release and consistently gets rid of the ball quickly. Sometimes gets deliberate when throwing, leading to defenders closing in and breaking up passes. Is accurate on throws all over the field. **Grade: 8.5**

**How QUARTERBACKS are graded:** Arm strength: Velocity, tight spiral, zip on deep out. Setup quicks: Feet, smoothness of drop, body position. Accuracy: Long and short, catchable ball, forces ball. Field vision: Locates second receiver, sees the whole field. Running ability: Threat, avoids rush, quick feet. Delivery: Quick release, high or low, mechanics. Ballhandling: Good fakes, freezes linebackers. Leadership: Poise under pressure, moves the team.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

\* Denotes underclassman

**2 MATT RYAN**

&gt; BOSTON COLLEGE

6-4 1/4	222	4.95	FINAL GRADE	<b>8.2</b>	
COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP	
2004	49.3%	350	2	3	4.93
2005	62.1%	1514	8	5	7.76
2006	61.6%	2942	15	10	6.89
2007	60.3%	4258	28	18	7.02

**NFL comparison:** Drew Brees, Saints**Arm strength:** Has a strong arm to make all the throws with zip and accuracy. If his footwork and release are off, he struggles to put velocity on downfield throws. Typically shows good power and touch on deep balls. **Grade: 8.0****Accuracy/delivery:** Struggled mightily with accuracy as a junior, but improved greatly as a senior with significant upgrades in his footwork and mechanics. Has a wind-up-style release, which doesn't hurt his accuracy but tends to make his passes more deliberate, allowing defensive backs to break and close fast to play the ball. That will be a bigger issue in the NFL. **Grade: 8.0****Field vision:** Usually identifies the defense at the line, making pre-snap adjustments in pass protection. Hasn't seen much underneath zone coverage, in which defenders tip his passes. **Grade: 7.0****Running ability:** Is a deceptively good athlete considering his limited speed. Shows quick footwork when moving in the pocket and consistently moves and slides to avoid sacks. Can scramble for the occasional first down, but can't take off and run for big gains. **Grade: 7.5****Intangibles:** Is a vocal, take-command leader with a knack for getting teammates to maintain focus in key situations. Stays poised in the pocket; doesn't panic with pressure in his face. As the pocket starts to collapse, he is willing to throw the ball away; doesn't throw the ball up for grabs just to avoid hits and sacks. **Grade: 8.5****Bottom line:** Ryan struggled through a difficult junior season because a foot injury limited his practice

time, hindering his footwork and mechanics. Once healthy as a senior, he carried the Boston College program. Ryan was especially impressive considering he had to study a whole new offense, learning to make new line calls and pre-snap adjustments. He has the physical skills, intelligence and confidence to become a great NFL starter.

**3 JOE FLACCO**

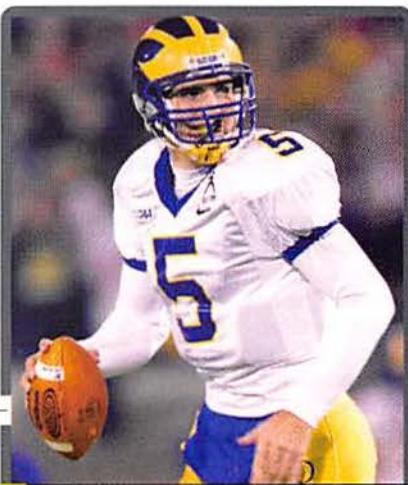
&gt; DELAWARE

6-6 1/4	232	4.80	FINAL GRADE	<b>8.0</b>	
COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP	
2004	25.0%	11	0	0	2.75
2006	63.3%	2783	18	10	6.67
2007	63.5%	4263	23	5	8.18

**NFL comparison:** Jay Cutler, Broncos**Arm strength:** Has a rocket arm to make all the downfield throws with amazing zip, even when his footwork is off. The ball explodes out of his hand when striding into a throw, reaching receivers very quickly. **Grade: 9.0****Accuracy/delivery:** Shows great accuracy when his knees are bent and he strides into throws. Sometimes throws with his front leg almost straight, missing the strike zone. Can be much more consistent with better knee bend and footwork, but tall quarterbacks tend to struggle to solve that problem. **Grade: 7.0****Field vision:** Sees the field remarkably well for a small-school prospect. Consistently reads the coverage and locates open receivers. Goes through progressions and doesn't hesitate to hit safety-valve receivers when no one is open downfield. **Grade: 8.0****Running ability:** Lacks the athleticism to make plays while running, but is quick enough to avoid sacks. Steps up in the pocket to avoid deep rushes. Gets outside the pocket when pressured; makes good, accurate throws on the move. **Grade: 6.0****Intangibles:** His ability to handle tough situations is a concern after he chose not to compete for the

starting job in Pittsburgh and transferred to I-AA Delaware. Doesn't consistently sense backside pressure. Clearly learned from good coaching, considering his fine execution with play-action fakes. **Grade: 7.0**

**Bottom line:** Flacco is tall, strong-armed and athletic enough to be an NFL star. Having played in a college offense where he primarily lined up out of the shotgun, he must adjust to a more traditional NFL structure. Because he comes out of I-AA Delaware, Flacco flew under the radar until the Senior Bowl. However, the first NFL GM who realizes Flacco's starting potential could get his team a steal.

**SKILL SET****► STRONGEST ARM****Joe Flacco** > *Delaware*

Simply put, Flacco has a rocket. When he keeps his knees bent and strides into his throws aggressively, he gets tremendous power.

**► QUICKEST RELEASE****Colt Brennan** > *Hawaii*

For all the knocks on Brennan's lack of size, he can get the ball out to the receiver on short passes in a flash.

**► MOST DANGEROUS RUNNER****Dennis Dixon** > *Oregon*

Dixon is recovering from a torn ACL, but prior to his injury, he was a speedy and athletic runner who consistently made big plays. Dixon could also play receiver or become a third-down running back if he fails to make it as a quarterback.

**► TOUGHEST****Matt Ryan** > *Boston College*

Ryan displayed true grit in 2006 when he played nearly the entire year with an ankle and foot injury. While it greatly affected his on-field production, he showed a lot of character battling through the pain to stay on the field for the team.

**► MOST BATTLE TESTED****Chad Henne** > *Michigan*

It is almost unheard of for a quarterback to come out of a major program like Michigan as a four-year starter. Even though Henne was inconsistent over that time, he's played in more big games than any other quarterback in this year's draft.

MATT RYAN



## 4TH ROUND

### 4 COLT BRENNAN

> HAWAII

6-2½ 185 4.90		FINAL GRADE 5.9		
COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP
2005 68.0%	4301	35	13	8.35
2006 72.6%	5549	58	12	9.93
2007 71.4%	4174	38	14	8.84

**Strengths:** Is very smart and reads defenses quickly. Consistently makes correct decisions. Stays poised in the pocket; doesn't get flustered if it collapses. Has a quick release. Is consistently accurate on both short- and deep-touch passes. Has outstanding leadership qualities. Is tough, having played through a painful ankle injury as a senior.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height, but his thin frame is a greater concern. Lack of bulk raises major durability issues. Has a three-quarters, dart-like throwing motion; gets too many passes tipped at the line. Needs a lot of help on footwork during dropbacks. Has played primarily in a run-and-shoot offense, throwing short passes out of the shotgun; must make major adjustments to fit a traditional NFL passing game. Needs to work on protecting the ball better when under duress.

**Bottom line:** Brennan was a prolific performer—yards, touchdowns, wins—at Hawaii, but his NFL stock is hurt by his small frame and poor performance at the Senior Bowl. He also must overcome the stigma that is attached to run-and-shoot quarterbacks, who tend to flame out quickly in the pros. Still, Brennan has enough athleticism, poise and accuracy to develop into a productive NFL quarterback.

### 5 ERIK AINGE

> TENNESSEE

6-5½ 225 5.10		FINAL GRADE 5.8		
COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP
2004 55.1%	1452	17	9	7.33
2005 45.5%	737	5	7	5.08
2006 67.0%	2989	19	9	8.59
2007 63.0%	3157	29	10	6.63

**Strengths:** Stands strong in the pocket. Is tough; played through a broken finger on his throwing hand in 2007. Has a solid arm. Reads defenses quickly and correctly. Is willing to take big hits to deliver balls. Has a nice dropback and a quick release. Is accurate on short routes. When striding into throws, he delivers well to intermediate and deep routes. Moves around in the pocket to buy time. Does not panic and force passes into coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Does not consistently stride into throws, limiting his accuracy and velocity and allowing defenders to play the ball. Lacks the athleticism to scramble for big plays. Stays upright in the pocket, hindering his ability to throw with good technique, which takes zip off his passes.

**Bottom line:** Ainge looks similar on film to former NFL quarterback Elvis Grbac. Ainge is tall, sets up nicely and shows a quick release to avoid pressure. He is not flashy, but doesn't make many mistakes, either, which gives him upside as a game-managing passer.

### 6 JOHN DAVID BOOTY

> USC

6-2½ 213 4.80		FINAL GRADE 5.7		
COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP

**Strengths:** Has the strong arm to make all the NFL throws with zip and accuracy when using good

technique. When striding into throws and being aggressive, he consistently delivers on intermediate and downfield passes. Is a good athlete; moves well in the pocket to avoid sacks. Doesn't hesitate to throw the ball away when under duress. Shows good quickness when dropping back and rolling out. Has the athleticism and body control to reset his feet and throw accurately when on the move.

**Weaknesses:** Shows inconsistent technique. Too often throws flat-footed or just flicks the ball, hurting his accuracy. Tends to throw a little behind receivers instead of leading them, which was a bigger problem in 2007 while adjusting to new receivers. Technique wanes the most when he is under duress; gets too many passes tipped at the line. Does not consistently see underneath coverage, allowing defenders to play the ball. Ability to make in-game adjustments and improve mentally is a concern.

**Bottom line:** Booty, the former backup to Matt Leinart, shows the arm, accuracy and athleticism to become a good NFL starter. But to do so, Booty must improve his footwork and technique. His game is similar to Houston's Matt Schaub, but whether Booty can raise his mental game to match his physical tools remains a question.

### 7 CHAD HENNE

> MICHIGAN

**Strengths:** Has a solid build with the arm to make all NFL throws when using proper technique. When striding into passes, he makes intermediate and deep throws with good zip and accuracy. Doesn't panic or throw passes up for grabs to avoid sacks. Goes through progressions nicely to find alternate receivers, and looks off safeties before coming back and making quick throws to open men. Has a quick setup and release.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to make good throws in key situations; did not improve in this area as a senior. Is inaccurate when under duress. Must greatly improve his footwork and accuracy. Throws downfield passes with more touch than

zip, allowing defenders time to break on the ball. Is just an adequate athlete, lacking the quickness and speed to buy him second chances.

**Bottom line:** Henne, who started all four years at Michigan, is an interesting prospect. He had a great freshman season, poor sophomore year and then bounced back in 2006, reestablishing himself as an NFL prospect. However, Henne regressed as a senior and once again was inconsistent. He is a similar prospect to Cleveland's Brady Quinn in that he plays well when everything goes right but struggles when under duress with defenders around his feet. Henne has the physical talent to start, but will end up being nothing more than a backup.

### 8 PAUL SMITH

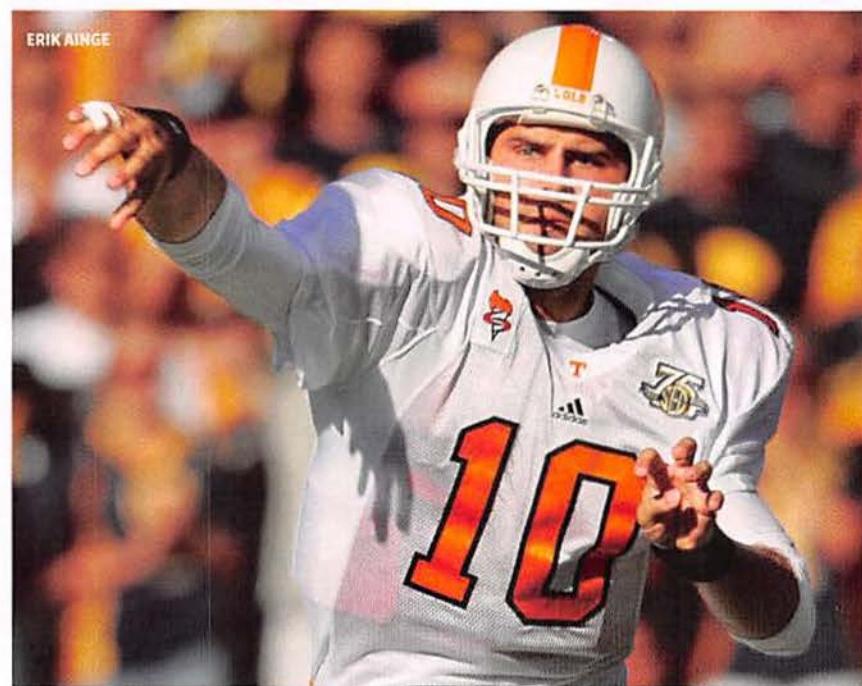
> TULSA

6-1 195 4.75		FINAL GRADE 5.5		
COMP	YDS	TD	INT	YD/COMP

**Strengths:** Is a great athlete who makes plays—both throwing and running—on the move. Has surprising arm strength; when striding into his throws aggressively, he delivers balls all over the field with great zip and accuracy. Stands out as a leader who raises his teammates' level of play in crucial situations. Shows the quickness, athleticism and speed to avoid sacks and scramble for big gains. Excels at finding receivers on the move, making strong, accurate throws without resetting his feet.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height; because of that, his lack of arm strength is a bigger issue. Is accustomed to playing from shotgun formations in a wide-open, spread-option passing offense; must adjust to starting under center and then dropping back. Sometimes is too competitive and tends to force plays when flushed from the pocket rather than throwing passes away. Forces some throws into bad spots.

**Bottom line:** Smith has shown the productivity and rare intangibles to give him a shot at being an NFL starter. He isn't impressive in terms of physique or arm strength, but consistently makes plays. While many NFL teams will probably write him off, there are too many positives for one not to take a flier on Smith in the middle of Day 2.



SAM KELLER



## 9 ANDRÉ WOODSON

&gt; KENTUCKY

6-4 1/4 234 4.70 FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete; makes plays with his arm and legs. When striding into passes, he has the arm strength to make all the NFL throws with zip and accuracy. Has nice touch on downfield passes when he's on his game. Rarely throws passes up for grabs; is content to throw away balls to avoid sacks. When sensing pressure, he has the quickness and athleticism to buy time.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw and inconsistent. Too often he does not stride into throws, simply flicking his arm and losing accuracy. Puts too much air under the ball on downfield passes, allowing defenders extra time to make plays. Played in a wide-open, short-passing attack in college, so he must adjust to a traditional NFL offense in which he will line up under center more frequently. Doesn't consistently see underneath coverage, allowing too many tipped passes.

**Bottom line:** Woodson is a frustrating quarterback to evaluate. He has the physical tools to be a good NFL signal-caller, but must greatly improve his mechanics and accuracy to make it in the league. On occasions, he does everything right and becomes a game-changing quarterback. Woodson must significantly improve his fundamentals to turn his natural talent into on-field production as a pro. If Woodson gets drafted higher than the fourth round, it will be purely based on his potential.

## 6TH ROUND

## 10 SAM KELLER

&gt; NEBRASKA

6-3 1/4 243 4.80 FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Makes big plays with both his arm and legs. Shows the athleticism to avoid sacks when sensing pressure. Has the body control to reset and throw accurately when scrambling. Tends to set up and throw quickly. When striding into passes, he makes all NFL throws with velocity and accuracy.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to consistently make good

decisions and accurate throws in tight situations; he threw several bad interceptions in important college games. Has trouble with footwork; sometimes gets flat-footed and relies on his arm strength to deliver the ball, losing accuracy and allowing defenders more time to break on passes. Has a strange release; his balls seem to be pushed instead of thrown. Doesn't consistently see underneath defenders; has too many passes tipped.

Leadership skills are questionable after losing the starting job at Arizona State and then transferring. Is a durability risk after missing the second half of his senior season to a non-throwing shoulder injury; was unable to stay healthy for a whole season in his two years as a starter.

**Bottom line:** Keller is a unique prospect. He exploded onto the national scene with a great 2005 season (four touchdown passes in each of the first four games) before injuring his hand and missing the last five games. Keller fell further down draft boards after an inconsistent 2007 in which he suffered a left-shoulder injury. Keller has the size, arm strength and athleticism to develop into an NFL starter, but must become much more consistent and improve his decision-making.

## 7TH ROUND

## 11 JOSH JOHNSON

&gt; SAN DIEGO

6-2 1/4 200 4.95

FINAL GRADE 4.2

**Strengths:** Has the athleticism and footwork to avoid sacks by bursting away from defenders. Has the speed to make big plays when scrambling. Keeps his head up and eyes downfield when forced from the pocket. Makes strong and accurate throws on the move. Has a quick, compact delivery. Has a strong arm; when his technique is right, he puts good zip and accuracy on intermediate and downfield throws.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw. Shows inconsistent footwork, hindering his ability to throw accurately. Must learn to stride into throws with the correct form; lacks

## SNAPSHOT

### ANDRÉ WOODSON

#### My breakthrough moment as a college player:

Winning the Music City Bowl the first year [over Clemson in 2006, when Woodson was named the game's MVP. He received the award again in 2007]. That hadn't been done in 22 years at Kentucky, and we hadn't been in a bowl game in [seven years]. That was a big time for the program and the university, and finally getting ourselves on the map.

#### My best memory from college:

Beating the national champions [LSU in a 43-37 triple-overtime game last October].

**My college stats fail to show ...** I'm a really calm and poised quarterback in the pocket. Stats don't show that, but when you watch film, you can just tell how real mellow I am. And when I get the ball out, nothing really bothers me. I just do a good job standing there reading and going through and trying to deliver the football.

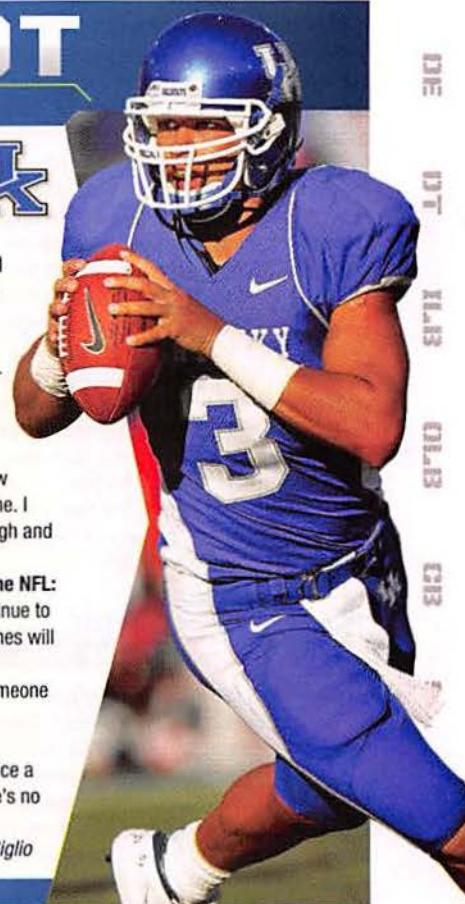
#### The part of my game that will need the most work in the NFL:

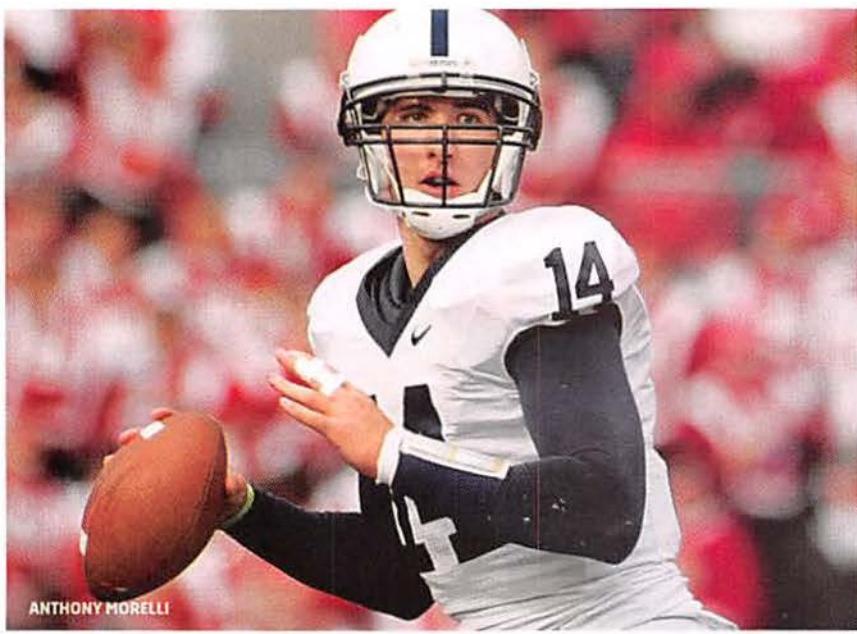
I really wouldn't say there's much. Obviously you can continue to get better with everything you do, and I think the pro coaches will be the biggest judges of that and help me out.

**Five years from now, I will be known as ...** hopefully someone who went to the next level and succeeded in life and just continued to step up to adversity and tried to overcome it.

**My advice to players entering college this year:** Practice a lot harder and better in the first three years. I mean, there's no telling where I'd be right now. I have way more potential.

—Mike Giglio





ANTHONY MORELLI

the big arm to get great velocity on passes without proper technique.

**Bottom line:** Johnson is an elite athlete, however, there is much to be done to refine his skills. He has a good release, but needs the footwork to match to become a legitimate NFL passer. Johnson is an intriguing late-round project.

## 12 ANTHONY MORELLI

&gt; PENN STATE

FINAL GRADE 4.1

**Strengths:** Has a big, strong arm; when on, he makes every throw—short, medium, deep—with great zip on his passes. Displays a quick and compact delivery. Has the strength to stay on his feet while defenders grab at him. Can pull free from potential sacks and buy second chances, making good throws on the move.

**Weaknesses:** Is more impressive as a physical specimen than a quarterback. Struggles with accuracy; his passes often flutter. Doesn't consistently stride into his throws, becoming an arm-slinger and losing accuracy. His mental mistakes trump throwing inconsistencies. Misses open receivers at times. Struggles against underneath coverage; zone defenders get good jumps to break up passes.

**Bottom line:** Morelli was once a highly-recruited high school quarterback, but his college work was frustrating to watch. His physical tools are impressive, and they should help him impress scouts. But his production never matched his gifts, and he has yet to show the mental makeup to become an NFL starter. A team will take a chance on him in the late rounds as a developmental project.

## 13 ALEX BRINK

&gt; WASHINGTON STATE

FINAL GRADE 4.1

**Strengths:** Is smart and consistently plays to his ability. Goes through progressions well to find second and third options. Makes accurate downfield throws when striding into passes. Remains poised in the pocket; doesn't panic under duress. Is willing to throw away passes to avoid sacks. Doesn't force throws into tight spots. Slides in the pocket nicely to buy extra time. Plays his best in big games.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Lacks the

quickness and athleticism to create if protection breaks down. Often pats the ball before throwing and has a slight hitch in his release, allowing defenders to break and close on too many of his passes. Does not consistently stride into his throws, hindering his velocity and accuracy on intermediate and downfield routes.

**Bottom line:** Brink, a four-year starter, is intelligent, but lacks the arm strength and athleticism to be an NFL starter. He projects as a good backup.

## 14 MATT FLYNN

&gt; LSU

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart; consistently makes good decisions and plays to the limits of his ability.

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

**Joe Flacco** > Delaware

He did not dominate the Senior Bowl like Jay Cutler did two years ago, but Flacco showed that he has the physical tools to start in the NFL.

### ON THE DECLINE

**John David Booty** > USC

Booty was expected to come to the Senior Bowl and quiet scouts' concerns about his accuracy. Instead, he struggled all week and has many questioning whether he can actually become an NFL starter.

### SLEEPER

**Paul Smith** > Tulsa

Smith is only 6-1 and looks even smaller in uniform. However, he has a stronger than expected arm and a knack for making big plays.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

**Anthony Morelli** > Penn State

Morelli was highly recruited out of high school and has the size and arm strength that is hard to find. However, he lacks the vision to see the entire field and struggles to read defenses consistently, which will lead to interceptions in the NFL.

Offers terrific intangibles and leadership skills. Is fundamentally sound; has good footwork and a decent release. Has a good enough arm to make most throws. Is pretty accurate.

**Weaknesses:** Has neither the arm nor the timing to fit passes into tight spots. Doesn't have the quick feet or agility to slide and avoid pressure; will get sacked often in the NFL. Is coming off a shoulder injury and must prove fully healthy to be drafted.

**Bottom line:** Flynn was content as a backup to last year's No. 1 overall pick, JaMarcus Russell, before leading LSU to a national championship as a senior. Flynn is a fine leader but has limited physical skills. Just as he was with LSU, Flynn must be more of a complementary part of a talented team to be effective. He projects as a solid long-term backup.

## 15 LUKE DRONE

&gt; ILLINOIS STATE

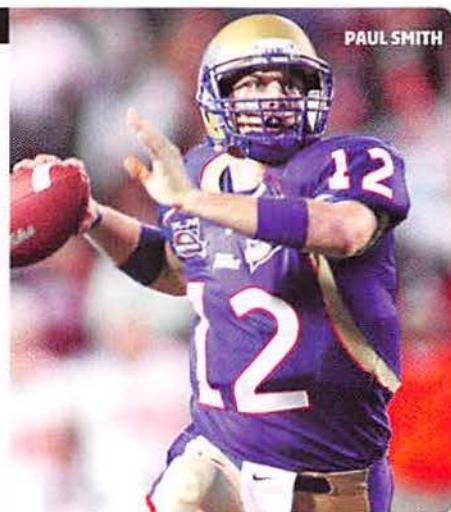
6-1 1/4 211 4.91

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Has fine leadership skills. Is smart; understands all the intricacies of the playbook. Has a good mental makeup; does not get rattled by pressure. Always tries to make plays and keeps the chains moving. Is accurate on short and medium routes, putting the ball in receivers' chests out of breaks. Shows good touch. Has ideal mechanics and a three-quarters release point. Is a good scrambler to his right, with enough speed to run for first downs. He's willing to take hard hits.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal arm strength; must coil his hips and legs to drive passes downfield. Without room in the pocket to step up and stride into throws, his downfield passes lack velocity. Is short. Struggles to throw accurately when rolling to his left. Misses horribly if unable to set his feet. Tends to hold balls too long if primary receivers are not open. Does not feel pressure well.

**Bottom line:** What Drone lacks in arm strength and



PAUL SMITH

### BIGGEST RISK

**André Woodson** > Kentucky

Even after a bad week at the Senior Bowl, some team is going to gamble and take Woodson in the second or third round. He is a major risk, because quarterbacks with such bad footwork and mechanics are rarely able to improve in those areas and become consistently accurate pro passers.

size, he makes up for in toughness and intelligence. He is more of a timing passer and will be drafted late, projecting as a No. 3 quarterback.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 16 DENNIS DIXON

> OREGON

6-4 205 4.55

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows elite athleticism and big-play ability as a quarterback, skills that also translate to wide receiver. Has the speed to run away from defenders. As a runner, he shows the vision to locate holes and cut on a dime. Displays strong leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks patience in the pocket. Shows poor decision-making skills, throwing passes to covered receivers. Has an adequate arm but his accuracy is terrible—much of it is due to his wildly inconsistent footwork and throwing technique. If he's shifted to wide receiver, he must learn how to run routes and prove that he has consistent catching ability. A torn ACL in his senior season hinders his draft stock; he won't be 100 percent until training camp.

**Bottom line:** Despite Dixon's great skills and athleticism, there are question marks. Can he play quarterback in the NFL? Is he willing to move to wide receiver, and can he play there? Will his knee recover and allow him to regain his speed, quickness and explosiveness? Will he choose baseball instead? Dixon will be fortunate just to be drafted.

### 17 BRET MEYER

> IOWA STATE

6-2 205 4.60

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a top-notch athlete. Makes big plays when scrambling. When under pressure, he has the quickness to avoid sacks and buy extra time. Has a strong arm; when stepping into throws, he puts good velocity on downfield passes. Steadily improved in college.

**Weaknesses:** Remains a better athlete than quarterback. Shows inconsistent footwork; doesn't always step into passes and sometimes over-strides. Has a long wind-up delivery, allowing defensive backs to break and play the ball. Shows bad footwork and shaky technique. Struggles to read underneath coverage; defenders often get their hands on his passes.

**Bottom line:** Meyer has the physical tools to play quarterback in the NFL, but needs to work a ton on technique. He should receive some consideration as a free-agent project.

### 18 CALEB HANIE

> COLORADO STATE

6-1 1/2 232 4.95

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Is big, strong and tough. Has great leadership skills. Is fairly accurate. Continues to improve. Is athletic enough to move around in the pocket and avoid sacks.

**Weaknesses:** Takes unnecessary chances, forcing passes into coverage. Is slow dropping back. Has average arm strength. Struggles to properly lead receivers. His downfield passes tend to float. Must speed up his release.

**Bottom line:** Hanie is mostly steady, but also tends to make bad throws. He will struggle to stick in the NFL.

## IN PROFILE

### COLT BRENNAN

HAWAII

**T**he doubters have returned, and Colt Brennan seems as if he truly doesn't care. He's been dealing with this a lot longer than you think.

"I love it," he says. "I love when people keep doubting."

The hardest times, of course, came in the aftermath of the sexual assault charges Brennan faced in 2004 as a redshirt freshman at Colorado. The charges were later dismissed, but he was convicted of second-degree burglary and first-degree criminal trespassing, for which he received a week of jail time and four years of probation.

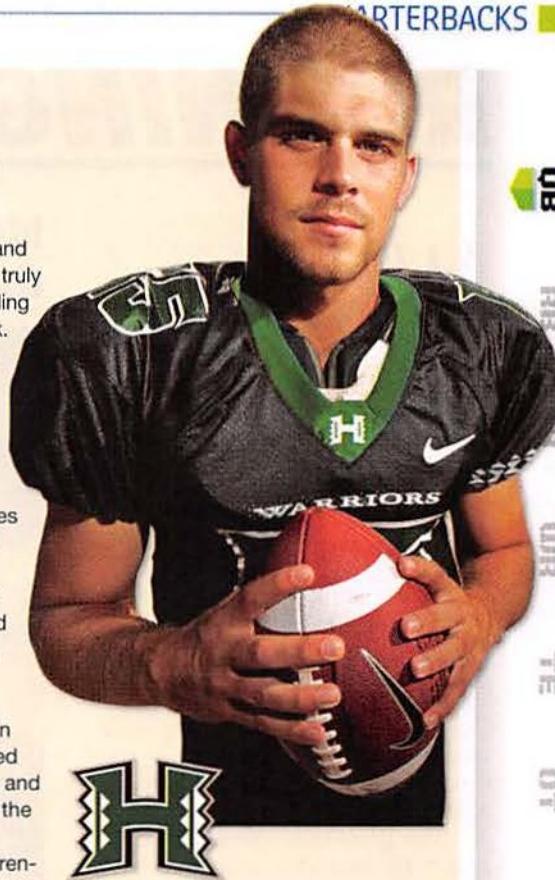
Brennan was banished to Saddleback Community College in California for one year, then offered redemption by coach June Jones and the island culture of Hawaii—and the rest is history.

As was the case at Colorado, Brennan was a walk-on at Hawaii, because no one else really believed in him. In high school, he spent his junior season backing up Matt Leinart at football powerhouse Mater Dei in Santa Ana, Calif. When Brennan finally got his shot as a senior in 2001, the team stumbled, and the recruiting spotlight never extended his way. His best scholarship offer came from Utah State.

"I didn't really have too many options," Brennan remembers, smiling a little.

So he made the sojourn from the sunny West Coast to the New England cold, where he enrolled for a post-graduate year at Worcester Academy in Massachusetts and played in front of snowbanks and crowds that sometimes numbered less than 20. Brennan missed four games with a broken finger and, despite winning the last five contests that season, again received just a single scholarship offer—from Utah State.

Recent history has been a far cry from all of that, with Brennan routinely praised for his character and leadership while breaking records in front of the 50,000-plus fans at Aloha Stadium over the past three years. For much of the 2007 season, Brennan was considered a Heisman candidate and potential first-round NFL Draft pick as he set the NCAA mark for career touchdown passes (131), among 30 other NCAA records, while leading the Warriors to their first-ever undefeated regular season, outright WAC title and BCS bowl.



But doubt, it turned out, lurked just around the corner, and crept back with every sack, interception and incompleteness Brennan suffered at the hands of the red-hot Georgia Bulldogs, who dismantled Hawaii 41-10 in the Sugar Bowl.

Brennan's draft stock began slipping immediately as terms like "system quarterback" and "three-quarters release" replaced "savior" and "redemption" in the national scouting discourse.

"Well, we're all system quarterbacks," Brennan says in his defense, noting that he grew up in the West Coast offense. "I think I ran the system pretty well. ... I had a really high completion percentage, and I was very efficient in college. No matter what system you're in, those are two things that are very key in a quarterback."

When Brennan showed up at this year's Senior Bowl weighing an eyebrow-raising 185 pounds after a bout with the flu, some scouts wondered whether he would come off the board not in the first round, but on the first day. But Brennan seemed more concerned with ending up in the right situation. Sometimes, that's all a player needs.

"I just want to go somewhere where somebody is going to invest some time in me and really think of me seriously as being their starting quarterback," he says. "I just want to keep playing football."

—Mike Giglio

A

# RUNNING BACKS

**W**hat looked like one of the worst draft classes for running backs in recent years received a boost by the addition of seven elite underclassmen, four of whom will be drafted in the first round.

Arkansas' Darren McFadden is the top running back in this year's draft, with Illinois' Rashard Mendenhall, Arkansas' Felix Jones and Rutgers' Ray Rice not far behind.

McFadden is a very strong back who plays bigger than his weight and thin-looking lower body projects. He has the strength, power and balance to consistently gain yards after contact and doesn't get enough credit for making tacklers miss.

Mendenhall did not receive much national attention until Illinois' amazing turnaround season in 2007, when he carried the offensive load. He is still developing, but has all the tools to eventually be a highly productive NFL starter.

While McFadden and Mendenhall are clearly the physical tackle-breaking types, Jones and Rice are more versatile. Jones possesses the best elusiveness and receiving skills among all the top tailbacks. He can be a dynamic weapon in many facets, including carrying the ball, catching passes and returning kicks and punts.

Rice is being overlooked because of his lack of size (5-9, 200 pounds), but plays much bigger and stronger, consistently gaining yards after contact.

Other ballcarriers who could go anywhere between the late first and early third round include Michigan's Mike Hart, East Carolina's Chris Johnson, Georgia Tech's Tashard Choice, Oregon's Jonathan Stewart, Central Florida's Kevin Smith and Texas' Jamaal Charles.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-1	225	4.40
NFL Minimum	5-8	185	4.60

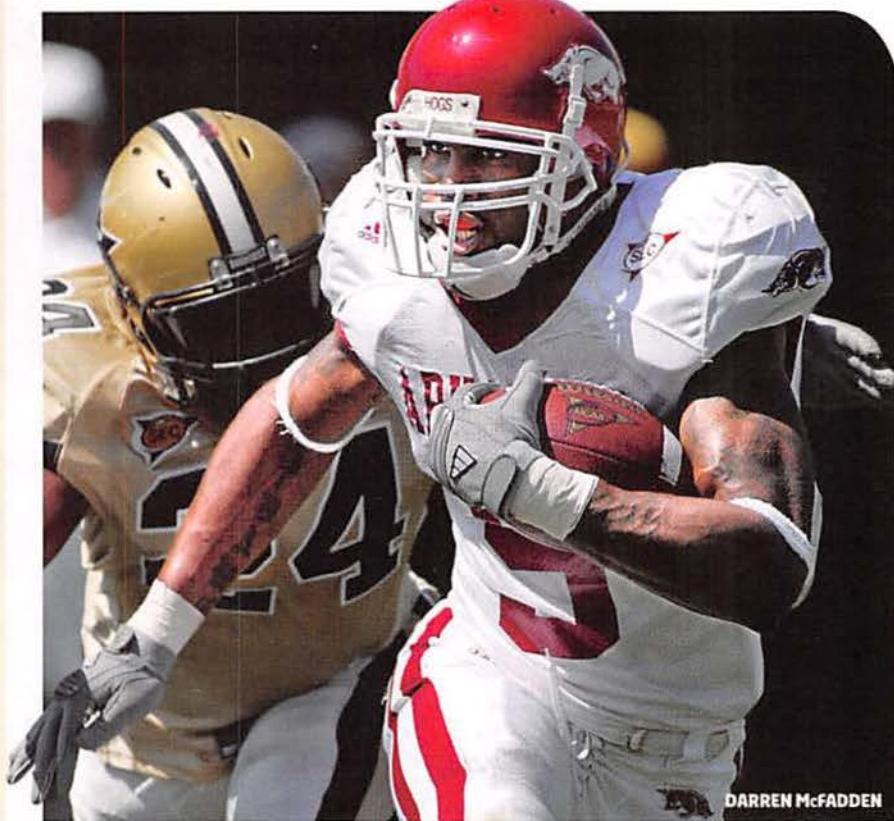
Premier running backs must contribute in all aspects of the game. The back must have vision to find the hole, patience to allow blocks to develop and explosiveness to get to—and through—the hole. He must have reliable hands, run sharp pass routes and pick up the blitzing linebacker. Teams want a back who is an effective runner between the tackles and creates mismatches in the passing game.

## 2007 DRAFT

RUNNING BACKS TAKEN: 19

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	2	4	3	3	1	2	4

**McFadden heads an early-entry list that is filled with future starters**



DARREN MCFADDEN

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 DARREN MCFADDEN\*

&gt; ARKANSAS

	RUSHING			RECEIVING		
	Avg	Yds	Td	Avg	Yds	Td
2005	6.3	1113	11	3.7	52	0
2006	5.8	1647	14	13.5	149	1
2007	5.7	1725	15	7.8	164	1

6-2 205 4.45

FINAL GRADE 8.4

NFL comparison: Steven Jackson, Rams

**Inside running:** Is a physical runner between the tackles. Shows the agility and balance to make quick cuts in traffic, moving and sliding well in tight quarters. Will lower his shoulder and deliver hard blows to defenders, knocking opponents backward and breaking free for more yards. **Grade: 8.5**

**Outside running:** Is deceptively good. Has the quickness and surprising burst to get around the corner. Uses his size, strength and agility to maintain balance after hits from linebackers and defensive backs. Is a naturally instinctive runner with good vision, making solid cutbacks outside to

avoid would-be tacklers. **Grade: 8.0**

**Blocking:** Lacks experience. Needs a lot of work in pass protection. Does not always work hard, usually making a feeble attempt to cut-block pass rushers. **Grade: 6.0**

**Hands/routes:** Lacks experience as a receiver, but has shown good hands. Does not run many routes downfield. On short routes, he lacks sharpness but shows the quickness to separate from defenders. After catching the ball, he is a dangerous runner who makes big plays. **Grade: 7.0**

**Durability:** Shared carries at Arkansas, but would still end up with at least 15 touches in most games. Is a strong runner who usually punishes would-be tacklers. Proved durable in college, but could use 10-15 more pounds of muscle to maintain durability as an NFL feature back. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** McFadden is a sure-fire first-round pick who consistently impresses scouts with his ability to gain yardage after contact. He has the tools to carry an NFL offense but must improve his pass-blocking and receiving skills to maximize his talent.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How RUNNING BACKS are graded:** Inside: Quick to the hole, vision, cuts. Outside: Speed to the corner, makes cuts, threat. Elusiveness: Avoids tackles, change of direction, moves, vision. Power: Balance, breaks tackles, short-yardage strength, falls forward. Blocker: Willing, pass protection, run blocking. Hands/routes: Catches the ball out of the backfield, tendency to fumble. Durability: Takes a hit, toughness, stays in the game. Running style: Slasher, darter, power, second gear.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-5.0—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 2 RASHARD MENDENHALL\*

&gt; ILLINOIS

	RUSHING			RECEIVING		
	Avg	Yds	Td	Avg	Yds	Td
2005	4.5	218	0	6.3	82	2
2006	8.2	640	5	13.7	164	1
2007	6.2	1526	16	8.9	259	2

5-11 210 4.50 FINAL GRADE 8.3

**NFL comparison:** Laurence Maroney, Patriots**Inside running:** Is big. Keeps his legs churning and fights for every yard. Does not protect the ball well in traffic, causing him to fumble. **Grade: 8.5****Outside running:** Shows quick footwork for his size. Accelerates to full speed quickly and shows deceptive speed to turn the corner. Has the agility and quickness to change directions to make sharp cutbacks through the backside hole. **Grade: 7.5****Blocking:** Lacks experience as a lead blocker, but has pass blocked frequently. Struggles to consistently keep pass rushers from the quarterback.Must improve technique. **Grade: 6.0****Hands/routes:** Has surprisingly good hands for a big back. Shows the quickness, agility and speed torun good routes. **Grade: 8.0****Durability:** Was only a full-time starter for one season at Illinois. Consistently runs hard and will play through pain. **Grade: 7.0****Bottom line:** Mendenhall shows a lot of upside. He has loads of talent and didn't receive a ton of carries at Illinois, so he has a lot of mileage left. He lacks the speed to "wow" people, but is quick, smooth and athletic and will be a solid NFL starter.

## 2ND ROUND

### 5 JONATHAN STEWART\*

&gt; OREGON

	RUSHING			RECEIVING		
	Avg	Yds	Td	Avg	Yds	Td
2005	3.5	188	6	6.4	45	1
2006	5.4	981	10	7.2	144	1
2007	5.7	1469	10	5.8	116	1

5-11 230 4.50 FINAL GRADE 7.8

**NFL comparison:** Jamal Lewis, Browns**Inside running:** Has the size, strength and balance to absorb hard hits and break tackles. Is not an aggressive runner; does not attack defenders or deliver hard blows. Lacks explosiveness to get behind the defense quickly. **Grade: 7.5****Outside running:** Is most productive when following blockers, using his strength and power to fight for extra yards. Is a smooth runner. **Grade: 6.0****Blocking:** Is solid in pass protection; knows his assignments and picks up the right defender. Stands up pass rushers with ease. **Grade: 8.0****Hands/routes:** Has good hands. Runs strong after the catch but is not elusive and lacks the explosiveness to make big plays. **Grade: 7.5****Durability:** Got plenty of reps at Oregon. Has the size and strength to be a durable NFL back, but has battled injuries throughout his career. **Grade: 6.5****Bottom line:** Stewart made a smart decision to declare for the 2008 draft. After struggling with injuries in his first two seasons at Oregon, he had a huge junior year. Stewart also could help as a receiver out of the backfield and kickoff returner.

### 6 KEVIN SMITH\*

&gt; CENTRAL FLORIDA

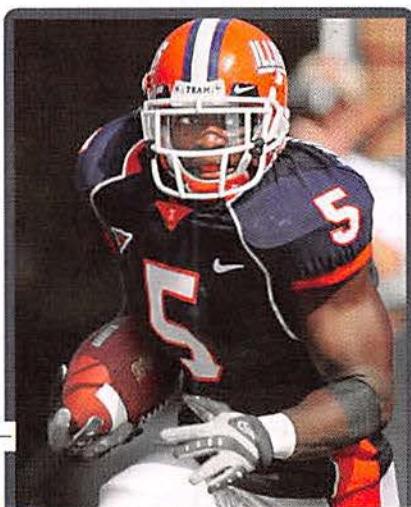
6-1 211 4.55 FINAL GRADE 7.7

**NFL comparison:** Rudi Johnson, Bengals**Inside running:** Is aggressive, gaining yards after contact. Gets stronger and more punishing with every carry. Shows quick footwork and balance to slide and cut to the hole and avoid hits. **Grade: 8.5****Outside running:** Shows deceptive quickness and burst to outrun defenders to the corner. Follows blockers and makes quick cuts off them to get through the hole. **Grade: 7.5****Blocking:** Lacks good technique, but usually does a good job in pass protection. Is a strong, competitive blocker. Has rarely been used as a run blocker, but shows the ability to do so effectively. **Grade: 7.5****Hands/routes:** Twists his body to adjust to off-target screen passes with surprising ease. Has some experience running routes downfield. Is elusive and productive after the catch. **Grade: 7.5****Durability:** Is big and strong. Was durable in college; has the tools and toughness to carry that over to the NFL. **Grade: 8.5****Bottom line:** Smith is more athletic than most big backs. He also has good hands and is solid in pass protection, allowing him to be a productive three-down back in the NFL.

### 7 CHRIS JOHNSON\*

&gt; EAST CAROLINA

5-10½ 195 4.32 FINAL GRADE 7.5

**NFL comparison:** Brian Westbrook, Eagles**Inside running:** Shows good vision; picks holes well

## SKILL SET

### BEST INSIDE RUNNER

Darren McFadden &gt; Arkansas

McFadden is an aggressive inside runner who consistently shows the willingness to lower his shoulder and deliver a blow to tacklers.

### BEST OPEN FIELD RUNNER

Felix Jones &gt; Arkansas

Jones is a strong back with very good playing speed and elusiveness.

### MOST FUMBLE-PRONE

Rashard Mendenhall &gt; Illinois

Mendenhall does not consistently wrap up the ball with both hands, allowing tacklers to grab his arms and strip it away.

### TOP RECEIVER

Chris Johnson &gt; East Carolina

Johnson actually played wide receiver early in his college career. He has naturally soft hands and can pluck the ball away from his body with ease.

### TOP BLOCKER

Jonathan Stewart &gt; Oregon

Stewart is a big, strong back who consistently picks up the correct person in passing protection and has the playing strength to stand up pass rushers.



JAMAAL CHARLES

and hits them with a burst. Has good strength, but is not a true power runner. **Grade: 6.5**

**Outside running:** Shows excellent speed in exploding to the corner. Spots cutback lanes once outside the tackles. Is fast enough to outrun defenders who have an angle on him. **Grade: 8.5**

**Blocking:** Is not much of a blocker. Lack of size is a concern. Must improve effort, technique and strength. **Grade: 5.0**

**Hands/routes:** Shows good concentration, looking the ball into his hands. Played some wide receiver in college; runs good routes. **Grade: 8.5**

**Durability:** Is a hard-nosed player. Does not shy from contact. Missed spring practice before his junior season because of a neck injury. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** Johnson is an explosive player who has not reached his potential. He is a threat to score on every touch with world-class speed. However, his lack of bulk will probably cause him to slide into the second or third round.

### 3RD ROUND

#### 8 JAMAAL CHARLES\*

> TEXAS

**FINAL GRADE 6.9**

**NFL comparison:** Tatum Bell, Lions

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with rare acceleration and speed. Reaches full speed in a flash, outrunning defenders who have the angle on him. Makes sharp cuts, explodes through the hole and shows the speed to score on long runs. Shows explosiveness and has the elite speed to make big plays after the catch. Has excellent work habits and character.

**Weaknesses:** Is not a big, powerful back who breaks many tackles or gains yardage after contact. Must learn to pick up his feet in traffic; gets tripped up too easily.

**Bottom line:** Charles would not have improved his draft stock by returning to Texas for his senior season. He is a tough player, but durability may keep him from being an NFL feature back.

and gain yards after contact. Makes sharp cuts and gets through the hole fast. Is a competitive runner who keeps his legs churning to fight for every yard.

**Weaknesses:** Is somewhat of a 'tweener. Looks like a big back but does not run with consistent aggressiveness. Will not break long runs in the NFL; gets tracked down from behind easily.

**Bottom line:** Forte did not receive much publicity before last season. In time, he'll become a solid NFL starter who handles 20 touches per game.

#### 12 ANTHONY ALRIDGE

> HOUSTON

**FINAL GRADE 6.5**

**NFL comparison:** Kevin Faulk, Patriots

**Strengths:** Has great speed, quickness and explosion. Is smart and runs with good vision. Shows lateral quickness to bounce outside.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks height. Gets overpowered as a blocker. Lacks natural strength as a runner.

**Bottom line:** Alridge is a gifted athlete who played wide receiver and running back at Houston, plus returned kickoffs. His lack of size will cause him to be drafted lower than his talent dictates.

#### 13 THOMAS BROWN

> GEORGIA

**FINAL GRADE 6.0**

**NFL comparison:** Darren Sproles, Chargers

**Strengths:** Is a great athlete. Shows big-play speed to score long touchdowns. Changes direction quickly and consistently leaves tacklers grasping for air. Accelerates to full speed quickly to outrun defenders to the corner. Has good hands as a receiver; is dangerous and elusive after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Is shorter than ideal. Has not proved durable. Does not break tackles.

**Bottom line:** Brown has many of the tools to be a playmaker, but projects as only a good third-down back due to his size.

### 4TH ROUND

#### 14 XAVIER OMON

> NORTHWEST MISSOURI STATE

**FINAL GRADE 5.9**

**Strengths:** Is a big, strong back with the strength, balance and competitiveness to

consistently gain yards after contact. Lowers his shoulder to deliver hard blows to would-be tacklers. Shows natural instincts as a runner; finds the hole and uses deceptive quickness on his cuts. Catches passes nicely and is a strong and elusive runner after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Does not always run hard. Lacks the speed and explosiveness to burst through the hole and get behind the defense. Must cure fumbling problems; carries the ball loosely.

**Bottom line:** Omon is a productive small-school back with the size, strength and athletic ability to become an NFL starter in a power-rushing offense.

#### 15 YVENSON BERNARD

> OREGON STATE

**FINAL GRADE 5.5**

**Strengths:** Has the quickness and agility to change directions in a flash. Shows the natural instincts and vision to locate holes and burst through them.

Is elusive, making would-be tacklers miss. Has good hands as a receiver.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height and looks small on film. Must add bulk. Does not break many tackles. Must be more aggressive in short-yardage situations. Lacks elite speed to run away from defenders. **Bottom line:** Bernard has experience playing in an NFL-style offense, so he will have to make few adjustments. He projects as a good backup who plays mostly on third downs.

## 5TH ROUND

### 16 STEVE SLATON\*

> WEST VIRGINIA

5-10 190 4.45 ✓ FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is quick and agile; changes directions to make tacklers miss. Has the instincts to locate holes and burst through them. Runs with good balance and deceptive strength. Is a good receiver. **Weaknesses:** Looks tiny on film; lack of size and strength raises concerns about durability. Will struggle to gain yardage after contact in the NFL; won't break tackles consistently.

**Bottom line:** Slaton should have stayed in school, as he lacks the strength and size to hold up as an NFL starter. He projects as a dangerous third-down back who uses his athleticism to make plays.

### 17 JUSTIN FORSETT

> CALIFORNIA

5-7 1/4 190 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Has good quickness and elusiveness, avoiding tacklers in the backfield. Runs with surprising toughness.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the elite speed to score on long runs. Was caught from behind at times in college, which will happen more in the NFL. Is a durability concern.

**Bottom line:** In 2005 and '06, Forsett flashed big-play ability while filling in for the injured Marshawn Lynch. He is not suited to be a full-time player but would be a solid spot starter.

### 18 KEON LATTIMORE

> MARYLAND

5-10 1/4 215 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness and agility to change directions and make would-be tacklers miss. Shows good instincts to find the hole and get through it. Is patient and follows blockers and makes decisive cuts. Has the strength and balance to absorb hard hits and keep on going.

**Weaknesses:** Did not carry the full load until his senior season. Lacks the elite explosiveness and speed to break big plays.

**Bottom line:** Lattimore has the size to be a physical runner, but teams should not over draft him because his ceiling is as a third-down back.

### 19 MARCUS THOMAS

> UTEP

6-1 1/4 213 4.60

FINAL GRADE 5.3

**Strengths:** Is well built and shows good instincts. Has a knack for finding the hole and getting through it. Makes small moves to make would-be tacklers miss.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the burst to explode through the hole and get behind the defense. Tends to fight the ball, dropping too many passes.

**Bottom line:** Thomas is a physical back who consistently runs hard, even in tight areas. He projects as an NFL backup, and is the type of player who often does a solid job when filling in as a starter.

### 20 TONY TEMPLE

> MISSOURI

5-8 1/4 202 4.60

FINAL GRADE 5.3

**Strengths:** Is tough; keeps his legs churning to fight for every yard. Has good hands out of the backfield. In the open field, he shows the strength, balance and quickness to consistently make plays.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the elite speed to score on long runs. Does not break many tackles. Lacks the quickness and agility to make tacklers miss.

**Bottom line:** Temple is a hard-nosed back who lacks the elite athleticism to be productive in the NFL. He is best suited as a backup and contributor on special teams coverage units.

## IN PROFILE

### RAY RICE

RUTGERS

If there's any second-guessing as to whether Ray Rice, a junior, made the right decision in declaring for the 2008 NFL Draft, it may be best to ask this first: What more could he have done at Rutgers?

In his final game as a Scarlet Knight, Rice shredded Ball State for 280 rushing yards and four touchdowns during a 52-30 victory at the International Bowl in Toronto. That put Rice at 2,012 rushing yards for the year, making him the 13th player in NCAA history to rush for more than 2,000 in a season.

"It's sad to say that my best game was my last game, but it also felt good to end it like that," Rice says.

It's not that Rice didn't have his share of bright moments before that; his name is scribbled everywhere in Rutgers' record books. And he has been key in helping turn the program around. As a freshman, Rice worked his way up from fourth on the depth chart to grab the starting job. He rushed for more than 1,100 yards that season, helping guide Rutgers to its second bowl game in the program's 136-year history.

That was merely the prelude to 2006, when Rice rushed for 20 touchdowns and 1,794 yards, second most in the nation. His breakout season helped fuel the Scarlet Knights' fairy tale

run—they came within an eyelash of their first Big East title and BCS bid before falling to West Virginia in triple overtime in the regular-season finale. However, Rutgers rebounded for the school's first bowl win, beating Kansas State 37-10 in the Texas Bowl. Rice, the game's MVP, rushed for 170 yards and a touchdown.

For all of Rice's accomplishments, he seems intent on following the advice of former teammate Brian Leonard, whom he credits with "teaching me how to be humble." They remain close, and Leonard, who was a rookie with the St. Louis Rams in 2007, says Rice's on-field demeanor stands out as much as his tough running style.

"You see a lot of guys nowadays with Ray's ability, but they take the attention away from their team when they do something good," Leonard says.

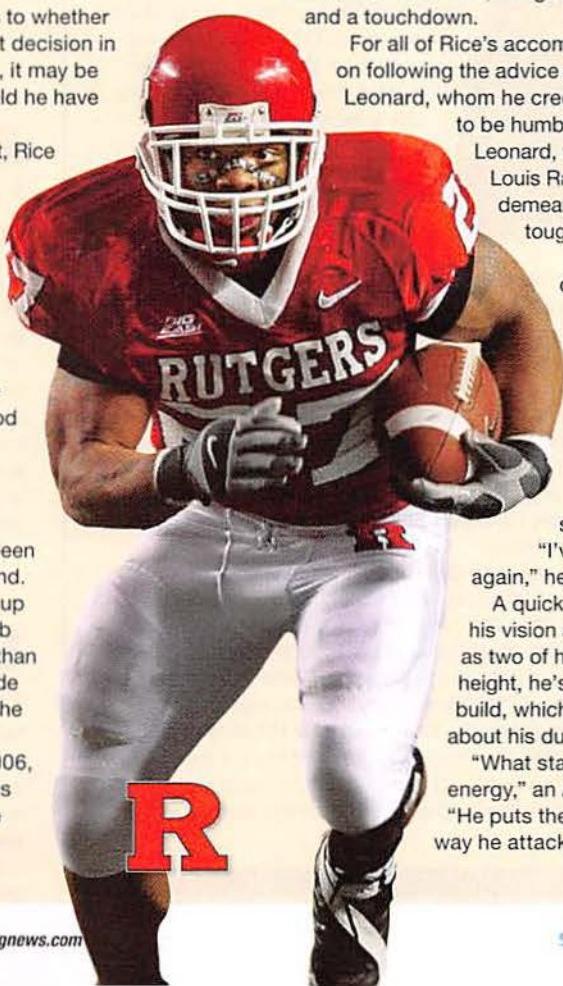
Rice knows there are a few knocks against him heading into the NFL—his lack of home-run speed, inexperience catching the ball and, most notably, his size (5-9).

"I've just got to prove them wrong again," he says.

A quick-cutting back, Rice considers his vision and ability to use his blockers as two of his biggest assets. Despite his height, he's a tough runner with a solid build, which should offset some concerns about his durability.

"What stands out most about Rice is his energy," an AFC personnel director says. "He puts the defense on its heels with the way he attacks the line of scrimmage."

—Katie Koss



## 21 DANTRELL SAVAGE

> OKLAHOMA STATE

5-8½ 187 4.45  FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Is solidly built and absorbs big hits to gain extra yardage. Shows good instincts to find the hole and burst through it. Is a patient runner who follows blockers. Is elusive. Has a nice spin move.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks experience; did not become a starter until late in his junior season and missed two games in 2007 with a groin injury. Does not pick up his feet in traffic. Lacks home-run speed.

**Bottom line:** Savage is quick and agile and should improve greatly with experience. His long-term durability is a question, but he has the tools to be a productive NFL backup.

## 22 JAMAR BRITTINGHAM

> BLOOMSBURG (PA.)

6-0½ 211 4.60  FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Is a power back with the toughness to run over defenders. Has a nose for the end zone as a goal-line runner. As a receiver, he has soft, natural hands. Does not fumble often. Is a natural leader.

**Weaknesses:** Has not played against elite

competition and faces a huge learning curve. Lacks elite speed. Gets chased down easily.

**Bottom line:** Brittingham dominated Division II opponents. He has the talent to be a good backup who contributes mostly in short-yardage situations.

## 23 CHAUNCEY WASHINGTON

> USC

5-11½ 215 4.55  FINAL GRADE 5.1

**Strengths:** Is a deceptively good athlete with the quickness and agility to make sharp cuts and hit the hole fast. Changes directions surprisingly well. Has good hands; makes tough catches seem easy.

**Weaknesses:** Shows more quickness than pure speed. Lacks the elusiveness to make would-be tacklers miss. Fumbles too often.

**Bottom line:** Washington is a competitive, instinctive runner who squeezes the most out of his talent; would be a good NFL backup.

## 24 AMIR PINNIX

> MINNESOTA

6-0 205 4.55  FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is a well-built back with the strength, balance and agility to absorb hard hits and keep his legs churning. Flashes the ability to break tackles.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the quick burst and speed to hit the hole and go the distance. Gets tracked down from behind easily. Lacks the elusiveness to make would-be tacklers miss.

**Bottom line:** Pinnix will always be limited by his lack of explosiveness, but he should be a strong between-the-tackles runner in the NFL.

## 25 BenJARVUS GREEN-ELLIS

> MISSISSIPPI

5-10½ 224 4.60  FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Keeps his legs churning to fight for every yard. Has the balance to absorb hits and keep going. Shows the instincts to find the hole. Has good awareness in pass protection.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the power to break tackles. Looks and plays smaller than his measured size would indicate. Lacks home-run speed and explosiveness. Has limited experience as a receiver.

**Bottom line:** Green-Ellis lacks the tools to be a productive NFL starter. However, his quickness and toughness make him worth a late-Day 2 pick.

## 26 RAFAEL LITTLE

> KENTUCKY

5-8½ 194 4.55  FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is quick and elusive. Shows the instincts to find the hole and the quick burst to get through it. Has the strength and balance to absorb hard hits and keep going. Is a good receiver.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't have home-run speed and explosiveness. Lacks the bulk and size to be an NFL starter. Is more of a durability risk after struggling to stay healthy as a senior.

**Bottom line:** Little consistently makes plays but is not the elite athlete NFL teams covet in short backs. He could become a solid third-down back with improvements in his pass protection.

## 6TH ROUND

### 27 JEHUU CAULCRICK

> MICHIGAN STATE

5-11½ 264 4.74  FINAL GRADE 4.7

**Strengths:** Is a power back who breaks tackles on inside runs. Has good strength and a powerful lower body. Hits the line hard and secures the ball well. Keeps his legs churning upon contact to move the pile for extra yardage. Has decent hands to catch passes outside his frame.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks home-run speed. Needs to have a hole to pick up positive yardage. Lacks good change-of-direction ability.

**Bottom line:** Caulcrick is a move-the-chains runner who is at his best in short-yardage situations. His lack of speed limits his NFL potential.

## 7TH ROUND

### 28 ALLEN PATRICK

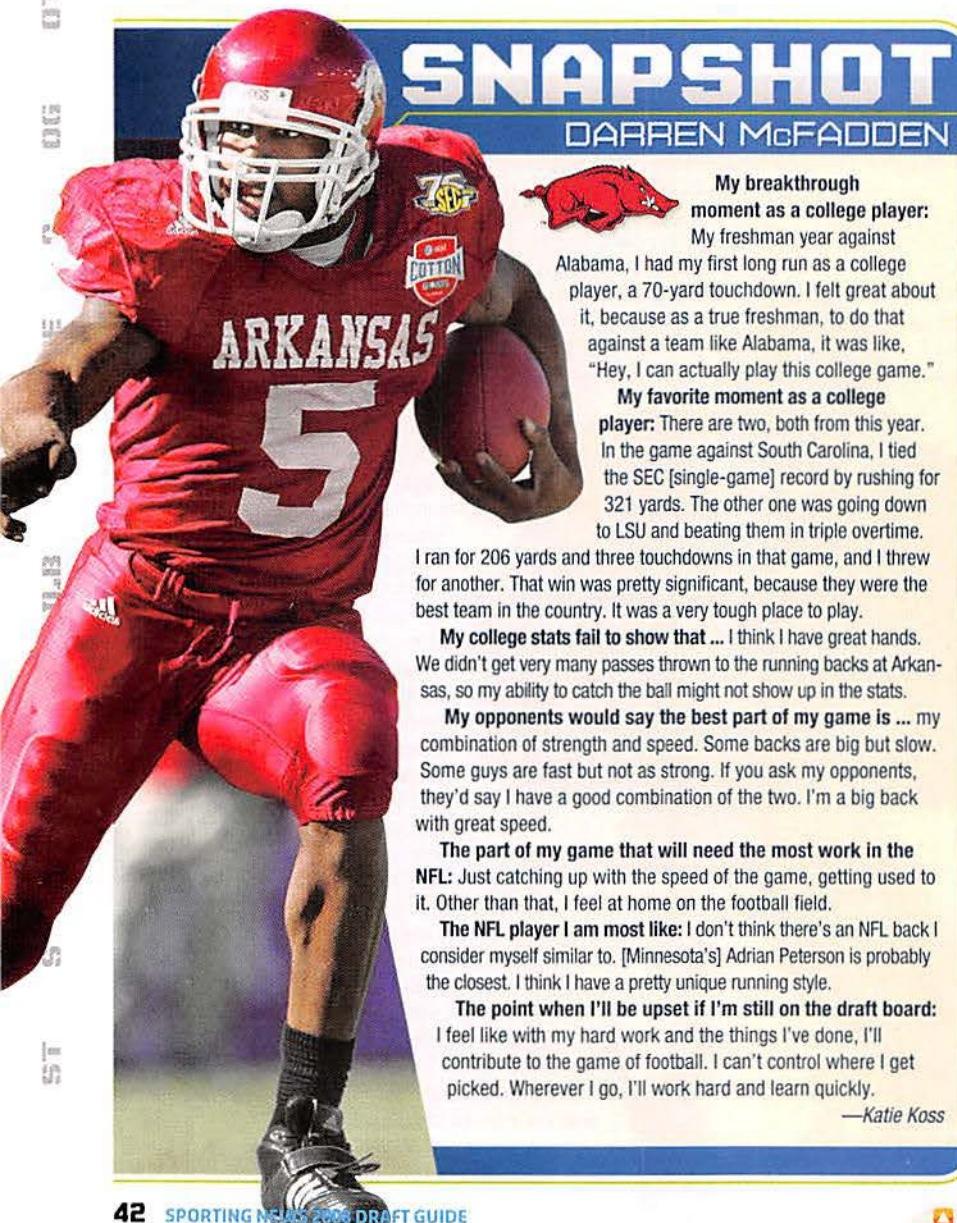
> OKLAHOMA

6-0½ 197 4.50  FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Consistently makes the quick cut and gets through the hole in a flash. Is an instinctive back with excellent vision. Returned kickoffs and played on coverage teams at Oklahoma.

**Weaknesses:** Is more quick than fast, lacking the elite explosiveness and home-run speed to explode through the hole and take runs the distance.

**SNAPSHOT**  
DARREN McFADDEN



**My breakthrough moment as a college player:**  
My freshman year against Alabama, I had my first long run as a college player, a 70-yard touchdown. I felt great about it, because as a true freshman, to do that against a team like Alabama, it was like, "Hey, I can actually play this college game."

**My favorite moment as a college player:**  
There are two, both from this year. In the game against South Carolina, I tied the SEC [single-game] record by rushing for 321 yards. The other one was going down to LSU and beating them in triple overtime. I ran for 206 yards and three touchdowns in that game, and I threw for another. That win was pretty significant, because they were the best team in the country. It was a very tough place to play.

**My college stats fail to show that ...** I think I have great hands. We didn't get very many passes thrown to the running backs at Arkansas, so my ability to catch the ball might not show up in the stats.

**My opponents would say the best part of my game is ...** my combination of strength and speed. Some backs are big but slow. Some guys are fast but not as strong. If you ask my opponents, they'd say I have a good combination of the two. I'm a big back with great speed.

**The part of my game that will need the most work in the NFL:** Just catching up with the speed of the game, getting used to it. Other than that, I feel at home on the football field.

**The NFL player I am most like:** I don't think there's an NFL back I consider myself similar to. [Minnesota's] Adrian Peterson is probably the closest. I think I have a pretty unique running style.

**The point when I'll be upset if I'm still on the draft board:** I feel like with my hard work and the things I've done, I'll contribute to the game of football. I can't control where I get picked. Wherever I go, I'll work hard and learn quickly.

—Katie Koss

**Bottom line:** Teams should hesitate to draft Patrick before the sixth or seventh round, but he projects as a backup because of his versatility.

## 29 CORY BOYD ► SOUTH CAROLINA

6-0% 212 4.55 FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is quick, athletic and agile. Changes directions quickly to make would-be tacklers miss. Shows the instincts to find the hole and burst through it. Is a tough runner who fights for every yard. As a receiver, he runs good routes downfield. **Weaknesses:** Lacks the elite explosiveness to get behind the defense and the speed to score on long touchdowns. Does not consistently protect the ball in traffic and gets stripped easily.

**Bottom line:** Boyd is somewhat of a wide receiver/running back 'tweener. While not worth more than a late-round pick, he could make an impact as a third-down back or No. 3 receiver.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 30 RYAN TORAIN ► ARIZONA STATE

6-0 214 4.64 + FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a tough runner who attacks the hole. Has the balance to absorb hard hits and keep on going. Shows good vision and patience as a runner. Wraps up the ball nicely in traffic.

**Weaknesses:** Cannot change directions quickly, limiting his ability to cut sharply and make tacklers miss. Lacks big-play ability and home-run speed.

**Bottom line:** Torain was a good prospect before fracturing his foot in October. If he returns fully healthy, Torain is the type of big, physical runner NFL teams covet to control the ball.

### 31 HUGH CHARLES ► COLORADO

5-7% 190 4.55 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Makes quick cuts to hit the hole in a blink. Catches the ball well out of the backfield. Spins free from tacklers who do not wrap him up. Absorbs hard hits and gains yardage after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Has struggled to stay healthy. Lacks size and bulk. Doesn't have home-run speed.

**Bottom line:** Charles lacks the strength and speed to compensate for his size. He has the tools to stick in the NFL as a change-of-pace third-down back.

### 32 LANCE BALL ► MARYLAND

5-9% 218 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is aggressive and gains yardage after contact. Lowers his shoulder to deliver hard blows to tacklers. Has good hands as a receiver.

**Weaknesses:** Is somewhat of a fullback/running back 'tweener. Lacks the explosiveness and speed to run away from defenders.

**Bottom line:** Not enough backs run with the competitiveness Ball does, but he is a 'tweener who could struggle to find a role in the NFL.

### 33 DANNY WOODHEAD ► CHADRON STATE

5-7% 193 4.54 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Runs with good instincts and vision. Consistently finds the hole and bursts through it. Fights for every yard. Has good hands.

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

#### Rashard Mendenhall > Illinois

Mendenhall has been flying up draft boards since scouts started evaluating him after he declared early. He's moved from a possible late pick in the first round to a likely top-20 selection.

### ON THE DECLINE

#### Steve Slaton > West Virginia

When Slaton decided to come out following his junior season, many expected him to be a first-round pick. But as scouts broke down the film, they did not see any special talent. Slaton is now likely to be drafted between the third and fifth rounds.

### SLEEPER

#### Xavier Omon > Northwest Missouri State

Omon is a big, physical and aggressive runner who consistently punishes tacklers and drags them for extra yards. He has the talent to be a strong and productive NFL starter.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

#### Thomas Brown > Georgia

Brown had some very productive stretches at Georgia, but consistently struggled to stay healthy. He must overcome his penchant for getting hurt.



XAVIER OMON

### BIGGEST RISK

#### Jonathan Stewart > Oregon

Stewart is a risky first-round pick despite having an outstanding 2007 season. He struggled with injuries throughout his first few years at Oregon and has not yet proven to be durable.

quickness to get through it. Absorbs hard hits and gains yards after contact, fighting for every last yard. Has good hands as a receiver out of the backfield.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosiveness and speed to shoot through the hole and outrun the defense for long touchdowns. Doesn't have the size to consistently break tackles.

**Bottom line:** Young is somewhat of a fullback/tailback 'tweener. He would be an ideal free-agent pickup because he could back up both positions.

### 34 ANDRE CALLENDER ► BOSTON COLLEGE

5-10 192 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Runs with good patience and instincts. Has the strength to be solid in pass protection. Catches the ball well out of the backfield and gains yards after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosiveness and speed to get through the hole quickly. Got caught from behind easily in college, and will have even more trouble in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Callender has the strength and balance to be a strong inside runner when called upon, and could be a versatile backup tailback.

### 35 DAMIAN SIMS ► IOWA

5-7 194 4.47 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is an instinctive back who finds the hole and gets through it. Runs with good agility and balance. Has experience as a receiver.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal bulk and size. In pass protection, he gets run over by blitzers.

**Bottom line:** Sims' ability as a receiver gives him a huge advantage, but his opportunities will be limited in the NFL because of his size.

### 36 ALBERT YOUNG ► IOWA

5-8 208 4.55 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows good instincts and vision as a runner. Finds the hole and has deceptive

### 37 LOUIS RANKIN ► WASHINGTON

6-0 195 4.50 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has the speed to get through the hole and score on long runs. Is a patient and instinctive runner who follows blockers. Has good hands as a receiver out of the backfield.

**Weaknesses:** Is thin, especially in his lower body. Struggles to absorb hits and keep going. Cannot break tackles. Has struggled to stay healthy and does not seem willing to play through pain.

**Bottom line:** Rankin was a marginal prospect entering 2007, but gained attention with a strong finish to the season. He could challenge for a roster spot as a third-down back and kickoff returner.

### 38 GREG MOORE ► CINCINNATI

6-1 220 4.70 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has good quickness and body control. Is a strong inside runner, showing good vision. Runs low and moves the pile. Is tough and works hard.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks speed and has no burst. Is too slow to be effective running outside. Does not look natural as a receiver.

**Bottom line:** Moore could hang around the NFL for a year or two because of his inside running ability and toughness.

# FULLBACKS

This class isn't deep, but there are four who could become quality starters in the NFL. While the top fullbacks are quality prospects with starting potential, none warrant a first-day pick like Brian Leonard (St. Louis) was a year ago.

What is most interesting about this group is that the top three all possess various styles and will have different draft values based on the needs of teams.

Arkansas' Peyton Hillis is not the classic hammer-style lead blocker who attacks defenders and delivers a hard blow. He's similar in playing style to Leonard than Lorenzo Neal (San Diego). Hillis is more of a positional lead blocker who has good technique and effort and also offers the ability to make plays with the ball in his hands. He is the only fullback in this year's class likely to be drafted in the first three rounds.

West Virginia's Owen Schmitt is more along the lines of the classic tough and aggressive lead blocker. He has consistently shown the desire and willingness to attack defenders and delivers a violent blow to knock a man out of the play. While Schmitt isn't an elusive runner and lacks elite speed, he is a good receiver out of the backfield and runs with strength and power.

Furman's Jerome Felton is a big, strong fullback with the size to be a good lead blocker. However, he was more of a ballcarrier in college. At the East-West Shrine Game, Felton showed the combination of size, strength, quick feet and athleticism to be a strong and productive fullback, but he's not a smooth and natural receiver out of the backfield.

Late-round fullback prospects include Georgia Tech's Mike Cox and LSU's Jacob Hester.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-0	240	4.60
NFL Minimum	5-10	225	4.85

The traditional fullback is a dying breed. It's the rare player who can serve as a lead blocker, receiver and ballcarrier. Most teams divide the role, often using tight ends and H-backs to fill the receiving duties. Some teams use defensive linemen as short-yardage and goal-line lead blockers. Most teams reserve a spot for a dominant lead blocker, but, for a fullback to make a roster, he must contribute on special teams.

## 2007 DRAFT

FULLBACKS TAKEN: 7

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	0	0	0	1	0	4	2

**Hogs' Hillis looks to be the only early-round prospect in an otherwise limited group**



PEYTON HILLIS

## 3RD ROUND

### 1 PEYTON HILLIS

&gt; ARKANSAS

6-0 7s 240 4.75 FINAL GRADE 6.5

	RUSHING			RECEIVING		
	Avg	Yds	Td	Avg	Yds	Td
2004	3.8	240	6	8.1	97	2
2005	4.8	315	3	10.6	402	4
2006	4.4	57	1	8.4	159	0
2007	5.7	327	2	11.0	485	5

**NFL Comparison:** Brian Leonard, Rams

**Strengths:** Is a good, versatile athlete capable of contributing as a blocker, runner and receiver from a variety of alignments (fullback, H-back, wingback, tight end and slot). As a receiver, shows good hands and runs sharp routes. Keeps defenders on his back, plucking passes away from

his body. Is adept at going into motion and kicking out the containment defender to open up off-tackle holes for ballcarriers. Has elusive running skills for a fullback.

**Weaknesses:** Is a positional run blocker who doesn't deliver strong, aggressive blocks or consistently get through the line in time to block the linebacker. At times, looks disinterested in blocking. Does not consistently stay after his block, allowing his man to get back into the play. Is not a strong or powerful runner.

**Bottom line:** The more film of Hillis you watch, the more he grows on you because of his ability to contribute as a blocker, receiver and ballcarrier. He is often compared to St. Louis fullback Brian Leonard, but Hillis is not as productive with the ball in his hands and must become a more consistent blocker.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How FULLBACKS are graded:** Inside: Quick to the hole, vision, cuts. Outside: Speed to the corner, makes cuts, threat. Elusiveness: Avoids tackles, change of direction, moves, vision. Power: Balance, breaks tackles, short-yardage strength, falls forward. Blocker: Willing, pass protection, run blocking. Hands/pass routes: Catches the ball out of the backfield, tendency to fumble. Durability: Takes a hit, toughness, stays in the game. Running style: Slasher, darter, power, second gear.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-5.0—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 4TH ROUND

## 2 OWEN SCHMITT

&gt; WEST VIRGINIA

6-1 3/4 247 4.85 FINAL GRADE 5.9

	RUSHING	RECEIVING				
Avg	Yds	Td	Avg	Yds	Td	
2005	7.9	380	2	9.5	76	0
2006	5.4	351	7	7.6	91	1
2007	4.7	208	3	10.1	121	1

**Strengths:** Has a good build and plays with rare toughness and an aggressive attitude. Is a strong, physical inside runner who absorbs hard hits.

**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete who lacks the agility and all-around flexibility to block moving targets in the open field. Struggles to maintain balance after initial contact with defenders.

**Bottom line:** Schmitt is a throwback fullback who makes his biggest plays as a blocker. He lacks the athleticism many teams covet, but is a solid lead blocker who consistently opens holes.

## 3 JEROME FELTON

&gt; FURMAN

5-11 3/4 242 4.75 FINAL GRADE 5.7

	RUSHING	RECEIVING				
Avg	Yds	Td	Avg	Yds	Td	
2004	4.5	300	10	10.2	51	1
2005	5.2	940	18	8.0	144	2
2006	4.4	707	23	6.5	85	0
2007	4.3	705	12	5.4	59	1

**Strengths:** A strong and powerful inside runner who consistently gains yardage after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Rarely plays with good technique as a lead blocker. Lacks explosiveness as a ballcarrier.

**Bottom line:** Felton is a small-school prospect with the size, strength and athleticism necessary to become a physical lead blocker.



## SKILL SET

## ► BEST ISOLATION BLOCKER

Owen Schmitt &gt; West Virginia

Consistently delivers hard hits and fights as hard as possible to keep defenders out of the play.

## ► BEST RECEIVER

Peyton Hillis &gt; Arkansas

Adjusts to make tough catches routinely and knows how to get open.

## ► BEST SHORT-YARDAGE RUNNER

Jacob Hester &gt; LSU

Has the strength, balance and competitive edge to consistently get tough yards after contact.

## DRAFT STATUS

## ON THE RISE

Jerome Felton &gt; Furman

Showed at the East-West Shrine Game that he's a very good athlete with the tools to become a versatile starting fullback.

## ► SLEEPER

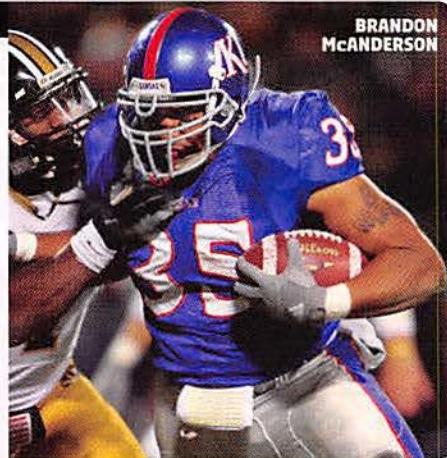
Justin Valentine &gt; Minnesota

A smart and versatile fullback who contributes as a positional lead blocker, receiver and pass blocker.

## ► BIGGEST RISK

Brandon McAnderson &gt; Kansas

Had a strong 2007 season, but was primarily a ballcarrier, so whether he can become a good lead blocker is a real question mark.



BRANDON MCANDERSON

## 5TH ROUND

## 4 MIKE COX

&gt; GEORGIA TECH

6-0 3/4 258 4.95

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Shows the strength to be a good lead blocker. Is physical between the tackles, keeping his legs churning to gain yards after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to block moving targets. Lacks the speed to make big plays.

**Bottom line:** Cox is pretty much a one-dimensional, old-school fullback who, with hard work, has the talent to become a quality NFL starter.

## 7TH ROUND

## 5 JACOB HESTER

&gt; LSU

5-10 3/4 230 4.90

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is a strong and aggressive runner who fights for every yard. Has good hands. Solid at lead blocking when under control.

**Weaknesses:** Is a stiff and limited athlete. Lacks the explosiveness and speed to make big plays.

**Bottom line:** Hester is the type of fullback who often makes it in the NFL as a backup because of his versatility as a blocker, runner and receiver.

## 6 JUSTIN VALENTINE

&gt; MINNESOTA

5-11 3/4 230 4.75

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and tough with excellent character and intangibles. Is a tough, hard-nosed runner who gains yardage after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks aggressiveness; doesn't fire into defenders. Size is also an issue.

**Bottom line:** Valentine may get overlooked due to mediocre blocking. However, his versatility could lead to him becoming a productive NFL starter.

## 7 MIKE VITI

&gt; ARMY

5-9 1/4 240 4.85

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Shows the strength to be a force at the point of attack when using good technique. Maintains good balance blocking in the open field.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't play with aggression. Lacks the quickness and speed to make big plays, along with explosiveness to burst through holes. As a lead blocker, too often gets upright and knocked back into the ballcarrier's path.

**Bottom line:** Although inconsistent, Viti shows good potential as a blocker, inside runner and receiver.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

## 8 BRANDON MCANDERSON

&gt; KANSAS

5-10 1/4 234 4.65

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a tough runner who keeps his legs moving upon contact, breaking tackles. Shows adequate vision in cuts and hitting holes with force.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite speed to be a threat on perimeter runs. Is not a strong blocker.

**Bottom line:** McAnderson played in a one-back set in college and isn't a true fullback. His best chance to stick on an NFL roster is as a No. 3 tailback.

## 9 CHRIS BROWN

&gt; TENNESSEE

6-2 250 4.90

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is productive as a fullback, H-back or in-line tight end. Is a competitive runner after the catch and has the strength to keep going after hits.

**Weaknesses:** Is not the smash-mouth blocker NFL teams covet at fullback. Lacks the explosiveness and speed to make big plays.

**Bottom line:** Brown is something of a 'tweener who looks like an H-back but lacks the speed and big-play ability to play that position.

## 10 ROLLY LUMBALA

&gt; IDAHO

6-0 1/4 249 4.85

FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Shows good size, strength and power. As a strong short-yardage ballcarrier, drives his legs upon contact.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't play one true position. Lacks quickness. Lacks the speed to make big plays.

**Bottom line:** Although Lumbala also played running back and tight end in college, his best fit in the NFL is as a backup fullback.

## 11 DOUG JONES

&gt; CINCINNATI

6-2 1/4 281 5.05

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Has nice size, and shows soft hands.

**Weaknesses:** Is a poor athlete who lacks strength and toughness. Doesn't move his feet upon contact. Lacks the speed to get open on pass plays.

**Bottom line:** Jones is nothing more than a training-camp invitee unless a team gambles and moves him to center or guard.



# WIDE RECEIVERS

While there is no receiver in this year's draft worth a top-five pick like Calvin Johnson (second overall to the Detroit Lions) was in 2007, as many as seven wideouts could go in the first round. The top receivers in this year's class are sure to be ranked in different orders on teams' draft boards.

According to our scouts, LSU's Early Doucet is rated No. 1. He struggled through an injury-plagued senior season, leading to questions about his durability. However, during his healthy 2006 campaign, he was oftentimes the best receiver on the field—which speaks loudly of his potential, considering Doucet shared time with Dwayne Bowe and Craig Davis, both first-round picks in 2007.

Not far behind Doucet is Oklahoma's Malcolm Kelly, who left school a year early. He has great height (6-4), very quick feet and top-notch athletic ability—a rare combination for a big receiver. What also sets Kelly apart is his excellent effort running after the catch and as a blocker.

Florida's Andre Caldwell improved his stock during the Senior Bowl, and has been steadily moving up draft boards over the last year. He has uncommon athleticism, speed and explosiveness for a 6-0 receiver.

One player in contention for top wideout is DeSean Jackson, who used top-flight speed to become a productive receiver and return man for California.

Michigan's Mario Manningham, Michigan State's Devin Thomas, Houston's Donnie Avery, Texas' Limas Sweed and Indiana's James Hardy round out the top wideouts.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-3	220	4.40
NFL Minimum	5-9	175	4.65

Sub-4.4 speed is one of the most noted attributes in a receiver, but it is rare and less important than other aspects. Teams want receivers who have the quickness and strength to beat press coverage, the tenacity and hands to make catches in traffic and the size and leaping ability to be threats downfield and in the red zone. Teams should not be so enamored with speed and size that they fail to recognize simple ability.

## 2007 DRAFT

WIDE RECEIVERS TAKEN: 35

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	6	3	8	3	5	3	7

Catch them if you can:  
top playmakers will be off the board early



EARLY DOUCET

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 EARLY DOUCET

&gt; LSU

	Avg	Yds	Rec TD
2004	14.3	257	2
2005	15.0	389	5
2006	13.1	772	8
2007	9.2	525	5

5-11<sup>7/8</sup> 211 4.45

FINAL GRADE 8.4

NFL comparison: Reggie Wayne, Colts

**Hands:** Reaches out and catches passes away from his body. Has the control and balance to twist and contort his body to catch off-target passes. Does not peek at defenders; willing to expose his body to catch passes in traffic. In games our scouts graded, he caught 96.7 percent of the passes thrown his way. **Grade: 9.0**

**Patterns:** Runs good routes. Shows the quickness and anticipation to get started quickly when the ball is snapped. Sells fakes well while running routes, turning around cornerbacks. Uses his body and hands well to push off. Shows the in-route burst to separate on downfield routes. **Grade: 8.0**

**How WIDE RECEIVERS are graded:** Hands: Concentration, snatches, soft hands. Routes: Sharp and crisp, body control, fakes, cuts. Catch long and short: Possession, acceleration, can go deep. Run after catch: Threat, catches in stride, elusive. Blocker: Willing, good results, sustains, open field. Release: Can avoid jam, not held up, physical. Reacts to the ball in a crowd: Comes over the middle, shows toughness. Initial quickness: Accelerates, gets off the ball, has extra gear.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

\* Denotes underclassman

**2 MALCOLM KELLY\***

&gt; OKLAHOMA

	Avg	Yds	Rec TD
2005	14.3	471	2
2006	16.0	993	10
2007	16.8	821	9

6-4 220 4.50

FINAL GRADE 8.3

**NFL comparison:** Andre Johnson, Texans**Hands:** Excellent. Reaches out and grabs passes away from his body. Gets his head and hands around to catch quick-hit passes. **Grade: 8.5****Patterns:** Is raw, but shows the footwork and athleticism to improve. Accelerates to full speed quickly. Gets in good position to cut off and shield defenders from balls. **Grade: 5.5****Run after catch:** Turns downfield immediately after catches and accelerates quickly to make big plays. Runs through arm tackles and keeps his feet moving to gain yardage after contact. **Grade: 8.5****Release:** Has the footwork to move quickly at the snap, but lacks an explosive burst to blow by cornerbacks. Defeats jams with his quick footwork, size and long arms. **Grade: 8.5****Blocking:** Is one of the most competitive blocking receivers our scouts have ever graded. Has the size and strength to consistently dominate his opponent. **Grade: 9.0****Bottom line:** Kelly made the smart decision by entering the 2008 draft, as he's sure to be a top-20 pick. He is a tall receiver with the athleticism, long arms and excellent hands to make great catches. Kelly is sure to make an instant impact in the NFL.**3 ANDRE CALDWELL**

&gt; FLORIDA

	Avg	Yds	Rec TD
2003	9.2	174	0
2004	16.0	689	3
2005	14.8	148	0
2006	10.1	577	6
2007	13.6	761	7

6-0½ 207 4.40

FINAL GRADE 8.1

**NFL comparison:** Chris Chambers, Chargers**Hands:** Has the hands to reach out and catch off-target passes. Is tough, willing to catch passesin traffic. **Grade: 8.5****Patterns:** Runs sharp routes. Makes fast cuts and has the burst to separate. Sets up defenders well, selling fakes. **Grade: 8.5****Run after catch:** Is explosive, elusive and fast. Lacks the size and strength to break tackles; shows the balance to run through arm tackles. Does not protect the ball, carrying it loosely. **Grade: 7.5****Release:** Has a quick first step. Can be jolted by aggressive cornerbacks, but shows the agility and quickness to avoid most jams. **Grade: 7.5****Blocking:** Works hard, but lacks the size or strength to consistently eliminate his opponent. **Grade: 5.5****Bottom line:** Caldwell became Florida's big-play receiver in 2006, then struggled with an ankle injury as a senior. After a year or so to develop, he will become a good NFL starter.**4 DeSEAN JACKSON\***

&gt; CALIFORNIA

	Avg	Yds	Rec TD
2005	15.8	601	7
2006	18.0	1060	9
2007	11.7	762	6

6-0 175 4.35 FINAL GRADE 8.0

**NFL comparison:** Santana Moss, Redskins**Hands:** Is a natural. Lacks elite size but stays focused to catch passes with defenders on his back. Gets his head and hands around to catch quick-hit passes. **Grade: 8.5****Patterns:** Is at his best on quick-hit routes behind or just beyond the line of scrimmage, providing a chance to make big plays after the catch. Sells in-route fakes to freeze a cornerback. **Grade: 7.5****Run after catch:** Is a touchdown threat on every touch. Spins and bursts downfield quickly after the catch, reaching full speed in a blink. Shows great instincts and vision as a runner to locate holes and burst through them for big plays. **Grade: 8.5****Release:** Lacks a good initial step; tends to rock backward just a shade at the snap. If able to eliminate that rocking, he could abuse cornerbacks at the line. **Grade: 5.5****Blocking:** Flashes surprising strength and competitive spirit, but is inconsistent. Tends to do a good job initially, but does not stay after it and allows his opponent to get in on plays. **Grade: 5.0****Bottom line:** Despite his size limitations, Jackson is a tough receiver. There are concerns, however, that he is a "me" guy, which could cause him to slip out of the first round. Jackson has the talent to become a dangerous NFL receiver and return man.**5 MARIO MANNINGHAM\***

&gt; MICHIGAN

	Avg	Yds	Rec TD
2005	16.0	433	6
2006	18.5	703	9
2007	16.3	1174	12

6-0 185 4.45 FINAL GRADE 8.0

**NFL comparison:** Isaac Bruce, Rams**Hands:** Reaches out and plucks the ball out of the air. Shows the concentration and toughness to catch passes in traffic and absorb hits. Can make the tough catches even with defenders on his back. **Grade: 8.5****Patterns:** Runs excellent routes to consistently separate against man-to-man coverage. Closes cushion on cornerbacks quickly and turns them around. Consistently bursts out of cuts to gain separation. Sells in-route fakes well. **Grade: 8.5****Run after catch:** Is a surprisingly aggressive runner, turning downfield immediately and attacking defenders if there is no open field. Shows good instincts and vision to find running room; makes quick cuts. **Grade: 7.5****Release:** Against press coverage, he shows the quickness and agility to avoid some jams, but isn't a big receiver capable of powering through it. Uses his hands well to escape jams but is slowed a bit at the snap. **Grade: 7.5****Blocking:** Works hard. Lacks the bulk and strength to dominate defensive backs, but sometimes gets pushed around. **Grade: 7.5****Bottom line:** Manningham is one of the draft's most polished receivers and should contribute early in his pro career. There sometimes is a tendency to downgrade thin, slight receivers, but Manningham is an exception and has the skills to be a solid NFL starter.**6 DEVIN THOMAS\***

&gt; MICHIGAN STATE

6-2 225 4.50 FINAL GRADE 8.0

**NFL comparison:** Dwayne Bowe, Chiefs**Hands:** Excellent. Consistently adjusts to make great catches on off-target throws. Has the leaping ability to catch high passes in traffic and consistently gets his feet down inbounds on passes along the sideline. **Grade: 8.5****Patterns:** Is smooth and fluid. Must improve route-running to maximize talent. **Grade: 5.5****Run after catch:** Looks and plays bigger than his measured size would indicate. Gets started downfield immediately after catches and runs aggressively. **Grade: 8.5****Release:** Shows deceptive acceleration, reaching full speed quickly. Has good speed, but lacks explosiveness into routes. Has the size, strength and long arms to defeat jams. **Grade: 6.0****Blocking:** Gives inconsistent effort. Is often in good position, but doesn't follow through and allows his opponent to make a play. **Grade: 6.0****Bottom line:** Thomas, a junior-college transfer who spent only one season in Division I, will likely be a



DEVIN THOMAS

late-first- or second-round pick. He can turn many short passes into big plays and contribute as a kickoff returner.

## 2ND ROUND

### 7 DONNIE AVERY

> HOUSTON

5-11 186 4.39

FINAL GRADE 7.9

**NFL comparison:** Ted Ginn Jr., Dolphins

**Hands:** Catches the ball effortlessly. Shows great concentration to look balls all the way in. Tracks deep passes well, leaping to catch balls at their highest points. **Grade: 8.0**

**Patterns:** Reaches top speed so quickly that defenders are often on their heels the entire game. Is explosive in and out of breaks. **Grade: 7.5**

**Run after catch:** Has the speed to score on every touch. Is tough to tackle in the open field because of his elite quickness and vision. Opponents do not catch him from behind. **Grade: 6.5**

**Release:** Must strengthen his upper body to escape from jams of long-armed cornerbacks. Can dodge jams with his quickness and explosiveness. Sometimes dances too much. **Grade: 7.0**

**Blocking:** Must improve in this area. His poor blocking skills have more to do with size than desire. Is a scrappy, tough player who works hard. **Grade: 5.0**

**Bottom line:** Avery is a game-changer. With additional strength, he won't get bounced around in traffic and will become an effective blocker. Avery could sneak into the bottom half of Round 1.

### 8 HARRY DOUGLAS

> LOUISVILLE

5-11 1/2 170 4.46

FINAL GRADE 7.0

**NFL comparison:** Derrick Mason, Ravens

**Hands:** Consistently catches balls other receivers cannot. In games graded by our scouts, he caught

91 percent of the passes thrown his way. Has the flexibility to get low and catch passes near the ground. **Grade: 8.5**

**Patterns:** Closes the cushion on cornerbacks quickly. Shows the quickness and agility to make sharp cuts and gain separation. Sells in-route fakes to freeze defenders and turn his man. **Grade: 7.5**

**Run after catch:** Is a touchdown threat on every catch. Bursts through creases. Stops and starts quickly to make tacklers miss. **Grade: 8.0**

**Release:** Gets off the line and into routes quickly, accelerating to full speed in a blink. Has the agility to change directions to avoid jams. **Grade: 6.5**

**Blocking:** Gets after opponents, making good initial contact and moving them out of the play. Doesn't always work to finish off blocks. **Grade: 5.5**

**Bottom line:** Douglas played in a pro-style offense in college and is well prepared for the NFL. He will probably be drafted a little later than he's rated here, but will become a good NFL starter who catches nearly every pass thrown his way.

## 3RD ROUND

### 9 LIMAS SWEED

> TEXAS

6-4 212 4.55

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Muhsin Muhammad, free agent

**Strengths:** Has the strength and quickness to defeat bump-and-run coverage. Is a strong and competitive runner after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Does not play as fast as his 40-time would suggest. Does not always fight for the ball. Is a durability risk after undergoing wrist surgery last season.

**Bottom line:** NFL teams should be wary of drafting Sweed high because he is a better athlete than football player. He's a risky pick, but one who could pay big dividends.

### 10 JORDY NELSON

> KANSAS STATE

6-2 1/2 215 4.62

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Brandon Marshall, Broncos

**Strengths:** Is a tough, every-down receiver who plays hard every snap. Shows good vision to find running creases. Has good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Must improve his hand usage and technique to defeat jams and get into routes quicker. Lacks the athleticism to consistently get separation deep.

**Bottom line:** Nelson projects as an NFL possession receiver who makes catches in traffic and breaks tackles to turn short passes into big plays. He can contribute immediately in the return game.

### 11 JAMES HARDY\*

> INDIANA

6-5 220 4.60

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Larry Fitzgerald, Cardinals

**Strengths:** Uses his size, strength and long arms to fight through jams to release to the inside. Is dangerous in the red zone. Is a strong and competitive runner after the catch, fighting for extra yards.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks quickness off the snap into routes and shows only adequate acceleration. Struggles to run sharp routes. Was arrested in 2006 and charged with battery, completing a diversion program to get the charges dropped.

**Bottom line:** Hardy would have improved his draft stock with another season of college. He has second-round talent and the potential to start in the NFL, but his off-field issues could drop him to Round 3.

### 12 EDDIE ROYAL\*

> VIRGINIA TECH

5-9 1/2 182 4.50

FINAL GRADE 6.7

**Strengths:** Is quick and elusive. Makes big plays after the catch and as a kickoff/punt return man. Is a legitimate threat to score on every touch. Has excellent hands.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height and bulk; durability will be an issue. Could struggle to escape jams by physical NFL cornerbacks.

**Bottom line:** Royal's lack of size is a concern because most small receivers struggle to stay healthy if overused in the NFL. Still, he can shine as a slot receiver and capable return man.

### 13 LAVELLE HAWKINS

> CALIFORNIA

5-11 1/2 187 4.55

FINAL GRADE 6.7

**Strengths:** Has the quickness and athleticism to accelerate to full speed in a blink. Is willing to run routes into traffic; catches passes, absorbs hits and holds on to balls.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't look natural catching passes. Lacks the ideal bulk and strength to break tackles or block his man on running plays.

**Bottom line:** Hawkins has the physical tools teams seek, but his inconsistent hands are a major concern. Such receivers don't last long in the NFL, regardless of athletic gifts.

### 14 EARL BENNETT\*

> VANDERBILT

6-1 205 4.50

FINAL GRADE 6.5

**Strengths:** Is smart and efficient. Knows how to get open. Has quick feet, getting into routes quickly and accelerating to full speed. Runs sharp, precise

routes. Has good size; makes catches in traffic and holds on to balls after hard hits.

**Weaknesses:** More quick than fast. Lacks the explosiveness and elite speed to consistently get separation deep.

**Bottom line:** Bennett won't be an explosive, playmaking pro receiver, but has the tools to be a productive starter who makes his living primarily on short routes. He can also help in the return game.

## 15 ADARIUS BOWMAN

> OKLAHOMA STATE

6-2<sup>1/2</sup> 220 4.55 FINAL GRADE 6.5

**Strengths:** Has the hands to consistently make great catches. Is tough. Absorbs hard hits and holds on to balls. Is smart and runs precise routes. Blocks well.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite speed. Will struggle to escape jams from NFL cornerbacks and get separation in tight man-to-man coverage. Missed a couple of games late in the season with a knee injury.

**Bottom line:** Bowman's health remains a concern, as he has lost some speed and burst because of the knee injury. If he shows consistent hands, Bowman has the tools to become a dangerous red-zone threat.

## 16 DEXTER JACKSON

> APPALACHIAN STATE

5-9<sup>1/2</sup> 179 4.55 FINAL GRADE 6.0

**Strengths:** Accelerates to full speed quickly and has the capability to get separation deep. Makes tough catches. Gets started downfield quickly after the catch and is an elusive open-field runner.

**Weaknesses:** Is shorter than ideal, but not as short as he looks on film. Lacks the size and strength to consistently block defenders out of plays.

**Bottom line:** Jackson struggled through an inconsistent 2007 season that caused many scouts to question how good his hands were. However, in all-star play against bigger-school competition, he was impressive, showing the agility, athleticism and hands to be a good NFL slot receiver.

## 17 DARIUS REYNAUD\*

> WEST VIRGINIA

5-9 200 4.55 FINAL GRADE 6.0

**Strengths:** Is a quick receiver who gets off the snap and into routes quickly. Has the hands, body control and coordination to adjust and make tough catches seem routine. Is deceptively strong. Has experience as a return man.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height and bulk. Gets slowed off the line by aggressive cornerback jams. Lack of size will hinder his blocking ability in NFL.

**Bottom line:** Reynaud is a classic slot receiver. He will probably be drafted a little lower than he's rated here because of his height, but in time will prove to be a good No. 3 receiver who also contributes on special teams.

## 18 JEROME SIMPSON

> COASTAL CAROLINA

6-1<sup>1/2</sup> 193 4.62 FINAL GRADE 6.0

**Strengths:** Uses his body well to gain separation. Has huge hands and makes one-handed catches with ease. Is tough and fearless in catching passes in traffic. Uses his hands well to escape jams. Is deceptively elusive. Is an outstanding athlete.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite speed. Is a marginal

blocker at best. Does not run crisp patterns; tends to round off the top of his routes. Has not faced elite competition.

**Bottom line:** Simpson improved his draft stock during this year's postseason all-star games and has a chance to move up draft boards. If he runs well, Simpson will have a shot at being a Day 1 pick.

## 19 MARK BRADFORD

> STANFORD

6-0<sup>1/2</sup> 212 4.55

FINAL GRADE 6.0

**Strengths:** Is a smart and instinctive receiver. Finds open spots in zone coverage. Holds on to balls and maintains balance when hit hard. Has good size.

**Weaknesses:** Runs a little upright in routes, limiting his explosiveness out of cuts. Lacks the elite

speed to stretch the field and gain deep separation. Does not run aggressively with the ball.

**Bottom line:** Bradford missed all but one game in 2006 because of a foot injury and redshirted. He won't ever provide big plays on a regular basis, but has the traits to become a quality No. 2 receiver.

## 4TH ROUND

### 20 MAURICE PURIFY

> NEBRASKA

6-3 220 4.50

FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is big and strong. Has the hands and body control to make tough catches on low passes and high jump balls. Is an aggressive runner after the catch and gains good yardage after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Has poor off-field judgment,

## SNAPSHOT

### DeSEAN JACKSON

**My breakthrough moment as a college player:** When I broke the [Pac-10 season] record for punt returns my sophomore season [2005] against the Arizona Wildcats. My sophomore year, I broke the record with four [former UCLA Bruin Maurice Jones-Drew held the record with three in 2005]. It was a huge moment for me because everybody was talking about it.

**My opponents would say the best part of my game is ...** my explosiveness, my speed and my strength. I play bigger than I really am.

**What makes me stand out from most wide receivers:** My speed and my ability to make guys miss down the field.

**The thing my college stats fail to show:** How someone with my ability and speed changes the way defenses play. I helped everyone around me play better.

**My greatest motivation in college:** Being able to go out every Saturday and compete with the best of the best. Playing at Cal, we had a good group of guys, and it really made me want to go out and put it on the line for them every game.

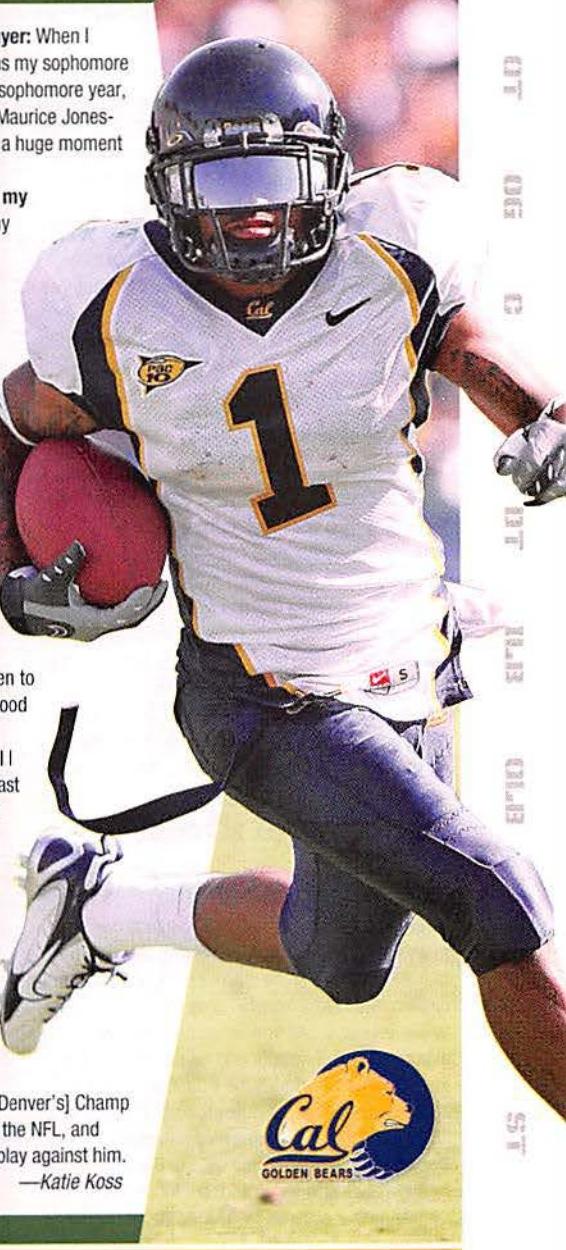
**The part of my game I take the most pride in:** My route-running. I work hard on running routes and being precise, knowing when to break routes off and when to cut. Also, I do a good job of coming back to the ball.

**The type of NFL offense I'd fit best in:** I feel I can play in any offense, but I played in a West Coast offense in college, so I know I could play in one in the NFL.

**The NFL players I'm most similar to:** I would say [Carolina's] Steve Smith, because of his speed, quickness and ability to run after the catch. Also, [Indianapolis'] Marvin Harrison, because of how consistent he is and how well he catches the ball.

**My goal as a rookie:** Whatever team I'm drafted by, I want to contribute to their success, on offense and special teams.

**The NFL player I'm most excited to face:** [Denver's] Champ Bailey. He's fast, one of the best cornerbacks in the NFL, and he's just a great player to watch. I can't wait to play against him.



consistently making bad decisions that have led to arrests and suspensions from the team. On the field, he lacks explosiveness off the snap.

**Bottom line:** Purify has the talent to be a productive NFL starter and red-zone threat, but must prove that his off-field troubles are behind him. No team should risk an early pick on him, but his physical tools make a late-round selection worth it.

## 21 KEVIN ROBINSON

> UTAH STATE  
5-11<sup>3/4</sup> 197 4.50 □ FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Has quick feet and good agility. Fights for every yard. Shows toughness catching passes in traffic. Is a competitive blocker. Was a productive return man in college.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite speed after the catch. Needs work as a route runner. Looks smaller on film than measured size.

**Bottom line:** Robinson was viewed by many as a possible late-round pick or free-agent signing before grabbing scouts' attention with his play in postseason all-star games. He projects as a good No. 3 receiver who works best out of the slot.

## 22 KEENAN BURTON

> KENTUCKY  
6-0<sup>1/4</sup> 203 4.58 □ FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a smooth and fluid athlete who gets open and makes tough catches. Has good size. Absorbs hard hits and holds on to balls. Is a solid kickoff returner.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosiveness and elite speed to be a home run threat in the NFL. Struggles to get off the line.

**Bottom line:** Burton is not a game-changer, but should develop into a solid No. 2 receiver because of his hands, intelligence, size and toughness.

## 23 MARCUS HENRY

> KANSAS  
6-3<sup>1/2</sup> 207 4.65 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Has good size and uses it well in traffic. Does well in jump-ball situations. Has good strength. Shows good body control.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks top-end speed and is not much of a deep threat. Does not have great explosiveness off the line or out of breaks. Is not a good blocker and does not do much to improve at it.

**Bottom line:** Henry looks the part of an NFL wide receiver, and his size and soft hands make him a particularly valuable target in traffic. He is not a burner, however.

## 24 DARRELL BLACKMAN

> N.C. STATE  
5-10 200 4.55 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is quick and elusive. Consistently makes plays in the open field. Shows the vision to find creases after the catch. Has good hands to catch passes away from his body.

**Weaknesses:** Looks smaller on film than his measured size; durability may be an issue. Lacks the elite speed to stretch the field. Shows only an adequate first step. Struggles to block on run plays. Lacks good judgment when fielding punts.

**Bottom line:** Blackman will slide to Day 2 because he lacks ideal size and speed, but he should not be overlooked because he can also make an impact as a return man.

## 25 JOHN DUNLAP

> N.C. STATE  
6-0<sup>7/8</sup> 215 4.58 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a quick-footed athlete. Makes things happen with the ball in his hands, eluding defenders as a runner. Is a competitive blocker.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal strength, limiting his ability to break tackles after catches. Is more quick than fast.

**Bottom line:** Dunlap will not be drafted as high as his athleticism indicates because of his lack of ideal strength for a starting receiver. However, he will be a solid option at receiver and punt returner.

## 26 WILL FRANKLIN

> MISSOURI  
6-0<sup>1/2</sup> 203 4.52 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, agility and speed to get open easily. Has the hands, body control and athleticism to adjust and make tough catches. Shows good running instincts and the agility to make would-be tacklers miss.



### SKILL SET

#### ► BEST HANDS

**Early Doucet** > *LSU*

Doucet catches every pass thrown his way, and consistently adjusts and makes great catches on off-target throws.

#### ► BIGGEST VERTICAL THREAT

**Donnie Avery** > *Houston*

Avery has premier deep speed and is consistently able to get separation on deep routes. However, he must become more reliable on the tough, over-the-shoulder catch downfield.

#### ► MOST DANGEROUS AFTER THE CATCH

**DeSean Jackson** > *California*

Jackson is a tremendous open-field runner who is a legitimate touchdown threat every time he touches the ball.

#### ► TOUGHEST OVER THE MIDDLE

**Malcolm Kelly** > *Oklahoma*

Kelly consistently goes after the ball aggressively on passes over the middle. Rather than peeking at the defense, he makes the catch, takes the hard hit and holds on to the ball.

#### ► BEST DOWNFIELD BLOCKER

**Malcolm Kelly** > *Oklahoma*

Kelly is superb in this area; he's the most competitive blocking receiver our scouts have ever evaluated.

**Weaknesses:** Is not always aggressive running after the catch. Must learn to sharpen routes. As a blocker, he is neither aggressive nor competitive.

**Bottom line:** Missouri had so many weapons in 2007 that Franklin didn't catch many passes. He will need a season or two as an NFL backup before working his way into a slot role.

## 27 D.J. HALL

> ALABAMA  
6-2<sup>1/4</sup> 190 4.47 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a tall receiver with playmaking ability. Shows explosive deep speed, separating from defenders to make plays downfield. Gives good effort as a blocker.

**Weaknesses:** Is a better athlete than football player. Raw route running and shaky hand usage raise questions about his off-field preparation.

**Bottom line:** Hall has many of the tools to be a productive, big-play NFL starter, but he did not dominate in college. Whoever drafts him will be taking a gamble on whether his athleticism will ever translate into elite receiving skills.

## 28 PAUL HUBBARD

> WISCONSIN  
6-2<sup>7/8</sup> 214 4.56 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is tall and well built. Shows surprising quickness, acceleration and speed. Gets downfield quickly after catches, showing the strength and balance to gain good yardage after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Must improve route-running technique. Occasionally loses focus and drops passes. Does not deliver blows to would-be tacklers.

**Bottom line:** Hubbard's toughness and athleticism were obvious in limited opportunities. Though unpolished, he has the tools to be an NFL starter.

## 29 DARNELL JENKINS

> MIAMI (FLA.)  
5-10<sup>1/2</sup> 190 4.50 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is athletic and well built. Runs sharp routes and shows the quickness out of cuts to gain separation. Is a good runner after the catch; makes would-be tacklers miss.

**Weaknesses:** Has a bad habit of taking his eyes off the ball and dropping easy catches. Struggled to stay healthy in college.

**Bottom line:** Jenkins was set for a breakthrough season in 2006 before injuring his knee. He is a risky pick because of a considerable injury history and the fact that his on-field production has never matched his talent.

## 30 MARCUS MONK

> ARKANSAS  
6-5 220 4.60 □ FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a strong receiver. Has the height, leaping ability and hands to win jump balls consistently, making him a dangerous red-zone threat. Runs hard after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the burst off the ball to beat cornerbacks initially. Does not consistently stay after blocks. Missed several games in 2007 because of a knee injury.

**Bottom line:** Monk, the Razorbacks' career leader in touchdown receptions, faces an uphill battle to move back into position to be drafted in the first three rounds. He is huge and has smooth athleticism, but lacks the speed that NFL teams covet.

**31 MIKEY HENDERSON**

&gt; GEORGIA

5-9 160 4.35

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Shows great athleticism and natural explosiveness. In limited time on offense, he has shown he can beat press coverage easily. Has the hands to make tough catches and field punts cleanly. Is an explosive ballcarrier.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks experience as a receiver. Must work on route running and learn to find open spots in the defense. Is thin for his height. Durability is a question mark.

**Bottom line:** Henderson was primarily an impact special teams player at Georgia and received only sporadic reps as a receiver. He has the hands, athleticism and coordination to eventually develop into a good No. 3 slot receiver and should be a big contributor on special teams.

**5TH ROUND****32 TAJ SMITH\***

&gt; SYRACUSE

6-0 1/2 184 4.45

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** A quick-footed receiver with good athleticism. Has the strength to maintain balance and to gain extra yards. Goes into traffic aggressively to catch passes in front of defenders; absorbs hard hits and holds on to balls.

**Weaknesses:** Shows only an adequate burst off the snap. Does not use his body well to shield defenders. Has durability concerns.

**Bottom line:** Smith arrived at Syracuse in 2006 as a junior-college transfer, but played in only a handful of games that season after breaking his collarbone. He will likely struggle early in the NFL before sticking as a backup.

**33 DORIEN BRYANT**

&gt; PURDUE

5-9 1/2 169 4.50

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Has great speed, quickness and hands. Gets to top speed in a flash and makes life tough on cornerbacks. A superb route runner who plays under pads and gets in and out of breaks quickly. Is light on his feet and shows great suddenness. Is a good kick returner.

**Weaknesses:** A marginal blocker who lacks effort and toughness. Has a smaller build and lacks strength. When not the primary target on offense, he does not give great effort.

**Bottom line:** Bryant is an outstanding athlete with good hands and the top-end speed to be a deep threat. He has second-round talent, but his questionable effort will drop him a couple of rounds.

**34 GARY BANKS**

&gt; TROY

6-0 1/2 195 4.60

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is quick, fluid and more athletic than he appears. Gets off the snap and into routes quickly. Runs sharp, precise routes. Adjusts well to catch off-target passes. As a blocker, he works hard and usually takes out his man.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the elite speed and explosive burst to run past defenders. Cannot gain separation on deep routes and is not a threat to turn short passes into big plays. Lacks the size and strength to either run over defenders or break tackles.

**Bottom line:** Banks is the type of receiver who often



MIKEY HENDERSON

**37 ERNIE WHEELWRIGHT**

&gt; MINNESOTA

6-4 1/2 212 4.60

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Has the size to be a red-zone force. Boasts good hands and concentration, going up and plucking high passes with ease. Uses his size and strength well to gain separation from defenders. When aggressive, runs strong after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal quickness, burst and speed. Does not gain separation deep or run away from the defense after catches. Fails to run sharp routes or use his hands well to defeat jams, raising questions about his off-field preparation.

**Bottom line:** Wheelwright is a disappointing receiver to evaluate. Despite having the tools to be a good possession receiver, he will struggle to stick around long in the NFL because he lacks explosiveness.

**38 DAVONE BESS\***

&gt; HAWAII

5-10 190 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Gets off the snap and into routes quickly. Runs sharp, precise routes; sells fakes well and shows quick burst out of cuts. Has experience returning punts.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the elite speed to compensate for his size and strength. Is more quick than fast and lacks the explosiveness to get separation downfield.

**Bottom line:** Bess was highly productive in college, but some of that can be attributed to Hawaii's pass-happy system. While not a projected starter, he has what it takes to be a good backup, contributing primarily as a slot receiver and punt returner.

**39 MARIO URRUTIA\***

&gt; LOUISVILLE

6-6 220 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is tall with deceptive speed as a long-strider. When maintaining focus, he has the hands to make tough catches. Is surprisingly productive on high sideline throws.

**Weaknesses:** An upright runner who lacks the flexibility, agility and quickness NFL teams covet.

Does not run sharp routes. Lacks the bulk and strength to consistently break tackles. Is not the most competitive blocker.

**Bottom line:** Urrutia has the hands to make impact catches, especially on outside routes, giving him some value to NFL teams. However, his lack of explosiveness and athleticism will prevent him from becoming a good all-around receiver.

## 6TH ROUND

### 40 RYAN GRICE-MULLEN\*

> HAWAII

5-9 180 4.50 FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is quick-footed; runs sharp routes, showing the burst out of cuts to separate on short routes. Is smart; reads coverages well and finds open spots. Has the agility to change directions quickly and is an elusive runner after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Is short; lacks the explosiveness and elite speed to compensate. Lacks the strength to break tackles and does not consistently gain yards after contact.

**Bottom line:** It's usually a bad idea for short, quick receivers to declare early after playing in a pass-first offense in college. Grice-Mullen projects as a solid mid-Day 2 selection who can develop into an NFL slot receiver, but he also must contribute on special teams to stick on a roster.

### 41 ARMAN SHIELDS

> RICHMOND

6-1 1/2 187 4.51 FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Has outstanding hands and runs good routes. Runs hard after the catch. Works well in traffic, going across the middle and battling. Has natural hands and attacks balls.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks great top-end speed. Is coming off a knee injury that cost him most of the 2007 season. Must make a quick adjustment to a much higher level of competition.

**Bottom line:** Shields is worth a late-round pick because of his hands, precise route running and toughness.

## 7TH ROUND

### 42 TODD BLYTHE

> IOWA STATE

6-4 1/2 207 4.65 FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Maximizes his ability and knows how to get open against all types of coverages. Is fearless catching passes in traffic and absorbing hard hits. Gives a good initial effort as a blocker.

**Weaknesses:** Will struggle to separate from NFL cornerbacks in man-to-man coverage. Struggles to defeat jams. Lacks the speed to gain separation on downfield routes. Does not stay with his blocks.

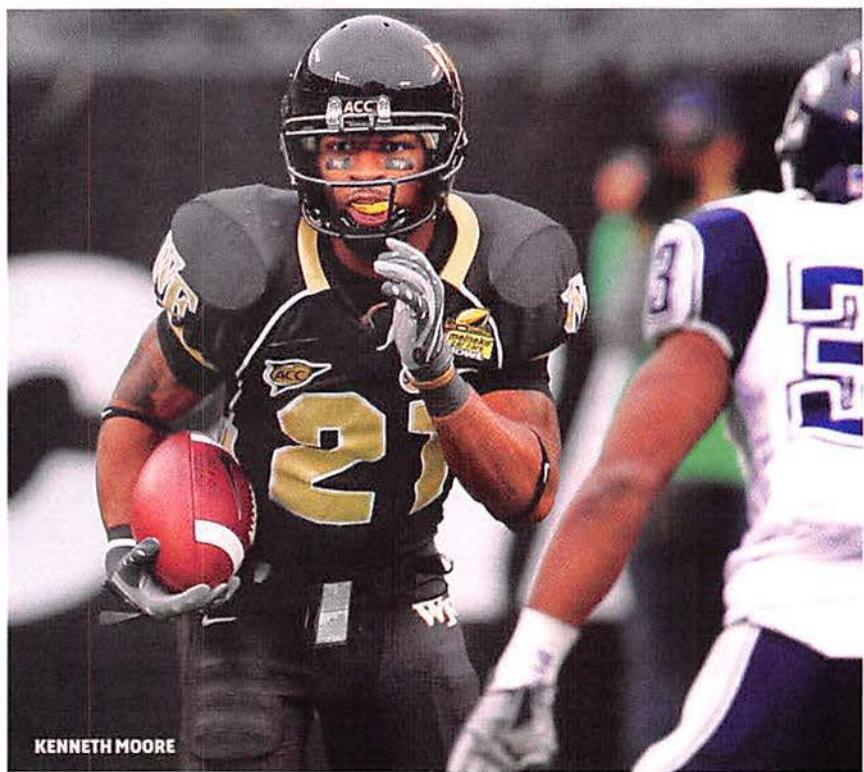
**Bottom line:** Blythe plays even taller than he's measured. He is tough, smart and should challenge for a roster spot as a backup and contributor on coverage units.

### 43 ADRIAN ARRINGTON\*

> MICHIGAN

6-3 190 4.55 FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is tall and has deceptive straight-line speed. Gets up and wins jump balls. Runs hard



KENNETH MOORE

### 46 KENNETH MOORE

> WAKE FOREST

5-11 198 4.55 FINAL GRADE 4.0

after the catch, fighting for every last yard.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the bulk and strength to compensate for a lack of burst and explosiveness. Shows just adequate initial burst off the snap. Is a character concern after a suspension last spring.

**Bottom line:** Arrington made a mistake by coming out a year early. He is not an elite talent and will likely be a fourth- or fifth-round pick.

### 44 TRAVIS BROWN

> NEW MEXICO

6-2 1/4 182 4.66 FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is a solid all-around receiver who does all the little things well. Uses his hands to defeat jams and fight defenders for balls. Catches everything near him. Is a good red-zone target.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosive burst to make big plays. Sometimes runs sloppy routes; must improve to beat man-to-man coverage. Lacks the extra gear to get downfield after catches. Must improve his blocking technique.

**Bottom line:** Brown can become a solid No. 3 or No. 4 receiver in the NFL after paying some dues on special teams or the practice squad.

### 45 JUSTIN HARPER

> VIRGINIA TECH

6-3 1/2 205 4.60 FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Looks the part of an NFL receiver in uniform. Has good hands and maintains focus to make tough catches on off-target passes. Is a competitive runner after the catch and has the size and strength to gain yards after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Not a smooth, fluid athlete. Has just adequate acceleration getting off the snap and into routes. Lacks the speed to stretch the field. Neither quick nor fluid on short-to-intermediate routes.

**Bottom line:** Harper is a solid receiver, but must work on his route-running to gain separation more consistently. He has enough tools to make it as a backup receiver.

### 47 DANNY AMENDOLA

> TEXAS TECH

5-10 1/2 178 4.48 FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is amazingly consistent. Has the hands to make tough catches look easy. Is a solid blocker downfield, which is rare for wide receivers. Runs precise routes to separate and finds holes in zone coverage. Also returns punts.

**Weaknesses:** Is thin. Must get stronger to escape jams and become a productive special teamer. Lacks elite speed and athleticism.

**Bottom line:** Amendola plays much like fellow Red Raider alum Wes Welker (New England), but lacks Welker's elite athleticism. Amendola fits best in the NFL as a third-down slot receiver.

### 48 LANCE LEGGETT

> MIAMI (FLA.)

6-3 190 4.45 FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Accelerates to full speed quickly and is fast enough to get open downfield. Has the hands and coordination to make tough catches outside his frame. Displays the speed, athleticism and size to make big plays after the catch, and is strong

enough to absorb hits and keep on going.

**Weaknesses:** Is somewhat of an enigma. Hasn't caught many passes, as he never became Miami's go-to receiver. Is thin, making him a durability risk. Runs routes a bit upright, hindering his ability to make sharp cuts and gain separation.

**Bottom line:** Leggett, a disappointing prospect, has not come close to maximizing his talent. A team is sure to gamble on him late in the draft, however.

## 49 BRIAN PAYSINGER

> OREGON

6-2 1/8 204 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is big and strong; separates well. Shows great body control to catch off-target passes and make catches in traffic. Is a good run blocker downfield. Has decent speed.

**Weaknesses:** A durability risk. Must run more consistent, polished routes. Lacks the explosiveness to stretch defenses vertically. Must play smarter.

**Bottom line:** Paysinger has the potential to become a solid NFL possession receiver, but must prove he can stay healthy. It is hard to see him as anything more than a backup who plays on special teams.

## 50 De'CODY FAGG

> FLORIDA STATE

6-1 3/8 211 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart; knows how to get open.

Runs sharp routes; sells fakes well to turn around defensive backs. Has the hands and body control to catch high passes and get his feet down inbounds. Willing to go over the middle and absorb hard hits. Works hard as a blocker.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite quickness, burst and speed; will struggle to gain separation and get open downfield. Lacks the flexibility to catch low passes. Does not always run hard after the catch.

**Bottom line:** Fagg has been praised for being a prolific pass catcher, but will have trouble making it in the NFL. He will struggle mightily to beat man-to-man coverage.

## 51 EVAN MOORE

> STANFORD

6-5 1/2 237 4.65

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Has a height/weight combination rivaled by few receivers. Runs hard to gain yards after contact. Is a strong, competitive blocker who gets a hold of his man quickly and rides him out of plays.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosiveness and speed to consistently gain separation. Cannot stretch the field. Doesn't consistently hold on to balls after absorbing hard hits. May be better suited to play tight end but is a little thin for that position.

**Bottom line:** Moore has a rare blend of size, strength and smooth athleticism, but lacks the quickness and burst to gain separation. A number of teams view him as a tight end prospect because he has the frame to add 15 to 20 pounds and shows good athleticism for the position.

## 52 WYNTON JACKSON

> LIBERTY

6-0 1/8 179 4.49

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is tall. Works hard every snap. Knows how to get open, especially against zone coverage. Is a strong, competitive blocker. Runs hard after the catch, fighting for every yard. Is a solid return man who hits holes hard.

**Weaknesses:** Is thin. Does not play as fast as he

times; is also slow to reach top speed. Lacks the explosiveness to make sudden cuts; is a one-speed player. Runs below-average routes and lacks crispness in and out of breaks.

**Bottom line:** Jackson is a better return man than wideout. He plays hard, but seems to lack hand/eye coordination. Jackson has a chance to stick with an NFL team as a backup and special teams player.

## 53 LUKE SWAN

> WISCONSIN

5-11 1/8 191 4.60

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is quick; gets off the snap and into routes fast. Gets separation out of cuts. Has good hands, body control and concentration to adjust and catch off-target passes.

**Weaknesses:** Must learn to control his arms better during routes to make sharper cuts. Lacks the elite speed to consistently gain separation downfield. Tore his hamstring six games into his senior season; needs six months to fully recover.

**Bottom line:** Swan grabs attention with his ability to make spectacular catches on off-target passes. Most teams will pass on him because of his hamstring injury. If Swan puts in the work to come back fully healthy, he has a shot at becoming a capable slot receiver and return man.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 54 PATRICK CARTER

> LOUISVILLE

6-2 3/4 195 4.49

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has surprising athleticism for a tall receiver. Uses quick footwork to get off the snap and accelerate to full speed quickly. Is fast. Has the hands and coordination to twist his body to catch

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

#### Eddie Royal > Virginia Tech

Royal, a small receiver, was probably a fourth- or fifth-round pick prior to the Senior Bowl. But his strong showing in Mobile moved him up to Round 2 or 3.

### ON THE DECLINE

#### Adarius Bowman > Oklahoma State

Bowman struggled through a tough week at the Senior Bowl, as he failed to get separation from cornerbacks and dropped too many passes. His stock has now slid from the second round to the third or even fourth round.

### SLEEPER

#### Dexter Jackson > Appalachian State

Jackson had an outstanding week at the East-West Shrine Game and followed that with a strong showing at the Senior Bowl. He was viewed as a late-round pick prior to those all-star games, but now could go as high as the third round.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

#### D.J. Hall > Alabama

Hall has the athleticism, elite playing speed and hands to be a good NFL starter, but was a very inconsistent college player and struggled at the Senior Bowl.

off-target passes. A tough and competitive runner after the catch, fighting for every yard.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw. Shows an inconsistent first step and initial burst off the line. Must improve the use of his hands to fight through jams. Was not productive in college. Must add bulk to his thin frame.

**Bottom line:** Carter, who didn't start in college, is a better athlete than football player. He is a long-term project, deserving only of late-round consideration.

## 55 OMAR HAUGABOOK

> TROY

5-11 1/8 211 4.51

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** A good athlete with the quickness and agility to stop and start and make would-be tacklers miss. An instinctive runner who follows blockers well. Shows burst through holes and can slip and slide in traffic to avoid hits.

**Weaknesses:** A long-term project. Must change positions; primarily played quarterback in a spread-option offense in college. Has little experience running routes and catching passes. Lacks great size or blazing speed.

**Bottom line:** Haugabook was a productive quarterback at Troy, but he must change positions to stick in the NFL. He could challenge for a roster spot as a receiver, running back and emergency quarterback.

## 56 MARCUS SMITH

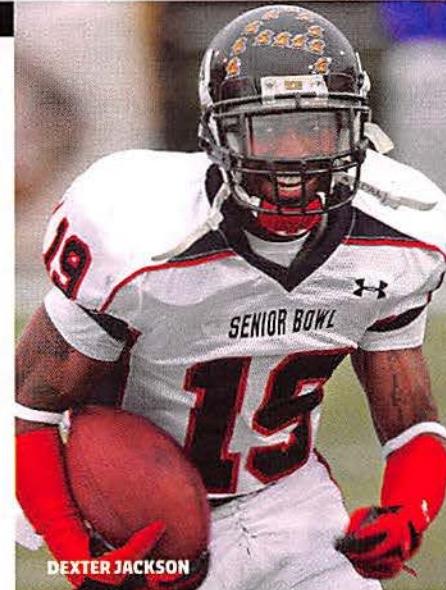
> NEW MEXICO

6-0 214 4.54

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has good size and speed. Shows some game-breaking ability. Runs good routes and has soft hands. Gets downfield immediately, gaining good yardage after the catch. A good athlete.

**Weaknesses:** His greatest weakness is mental—he doesn't work hard every play. Lacks explosiveness off the line and an extra gear to provide big plays.



### BIGGEST RISK

#### Limas Sweed > Texas

Sweed is a big receiver with excellent athleticism, which will probably get him drafted in the first or second round. However, he had to undergo wrist surgery and was already inconsistent catching passes before the injury.

**Bottom line:** Smith moved from running back to wide receiver in 2006 and has all the athletic traits NFL coaches want in a No. 2 possession wideout. He can also help on special teams.

## 57 ROBERT JORDAN

> CALIFORNIA

5-10 1/8 161 4.61 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Turns downfield quickly after catches and makes would-be tacklers miss. Has the strength and balance to absorb hard hits, hold on to balls and gain yards after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent. Lacks elite speed. Does not look natural catching passes. Has just adequate quickness off the snap. Will struggle to escape jams by physical NFL cornerbacks.

**Bottom line:** With a ton of skills, Jordan has a good chance of being drafted. However, he probably won't become consistent enough to stick as anything more than an NFL backup.

## 58 AMARRI JACKSON

> SOUTH FLORIDA

6-5 200 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is very tall, which helps him grab high passes. Does a good job of catching balls away from his body. Has surprisingly quick feet and the agility to make would-be tacklers miss.

**Weaknesses:** Neither quick nor explosive off the ball; shows little burst when running routes. Does not consistently finish blocks.

**Bottom line:** For such a tall receiver, Jackson is very thin, which raises concerns about his durability in the NFL. He could stick as a backup who specializes in red-zone packages.

## 59 TERENCE NUNN

> NEBRASKA

6-0 190 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Runs sharp and precise routes and uses his hands and body to create separation. Sells fakes well. Is tough and willing to catch passes in traffic and absorb hits.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks an explosive burst off the snap. Doesn't have the speed to get open downfield.

**Bottom line:** Nunn has toughness, smarts and competitiveness but lacks NFL-caliber explosiveness and speed. He can contribute as a backup receiver and on special teams.

## 60 KEITH BROWN

> ALABAMA

6-2 204 4.51 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is tall with good straight-line speed. Is willing to run aggressive post routes in traffic; will go up to catch high passes and absorb big hits.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to make quick cuts. Sometimes loses focus and drops catchable balls. Looks a bit thin, raising durability questions.

**Bottom line:** Brown was suspended for Alabama's opener and struggled to get consistent playing time. With his height and explosiveness, however, he has the talent to at least be a backup.

## 61 FRANTZ HARDY

> NEBRASKA

6-0 180 4.50 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is quick and accelerates to full speed in a flash. Has the pure speed to run away from defenders after catches.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent and never became a

## IN PROFILE

### EARLY DOUCET

LSU

**D**eep in the heart of Cajun country, Early Doucet finished his career at St. Martinville High in 2003 with a stat line to make him one of the top recruits in the nation: 7,104 all-purpose yards and 79 touchdowns in four years as a starter. He mostly played quarterback, but also lined up as running back, wide receiver, kick returner and safety along the way.

So it was little wonder when, after two impressive practices at this year's Senior Bowl, reporters clamored to ask Doucet whether he was the most talented athlete on the field. Their subsequent injury-related questions came as no surprise, either, except that they now focused on a new ailment.

Doucet would miss the rest of the week with a hamstring pull, a microcosm of the freak groin injury that robbed him of five full games during what was supposed to be a breakout senior season. After waiting patiently behind the star tandem of Dwayne Bowe and Craig Davis, who were selected seven picks apart in the first round of last year's draft, Doucet had established himself as a veteran leader and looked to develop into a top receiving threat.

"How to be tough, how to play physical and compete every day," Doucet says when asked what he learned from Bowe and Davis. "And don't take this game for granted. You gotta respect the game, or something bad could happen to you."

After slipping and hurting his groin during walk-through drills the night before the season's third game—the first serious injury of his career, at perhaps the worst possible time—Doucet had to put those sentiments to use. He underwent a vigorous rehab program to make it back for the Oct. 20 game against Auburn, which came on the heels of a devastating triple-overtime loss to Kentucky that knocked the Tigers from the top spot in the BCS standings.

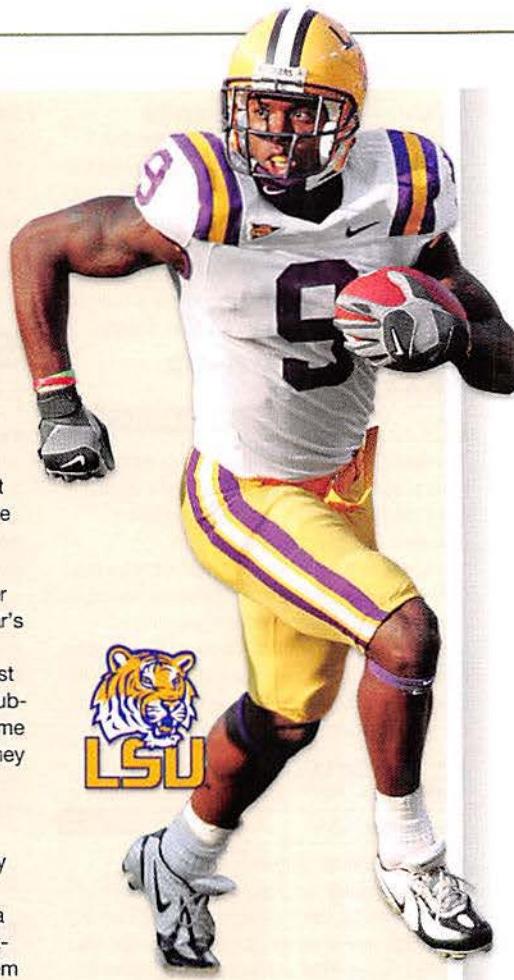
full-time starter in college. Does not consistently reach out and catch passes with his hands.

**Bottom line:** Hardy has good physical skills but will need at least a season on a practice squad to develop into a decent backup.

## 62 ANTHONY BROWN

> OREGON STATE

6-0 1/8 210 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9



In the 30-24 win over Auburn, Doucet reeled in seven catches for 93 yards. The next week at Alabama, he scored two touchdowns, including one late in the game that tied the score and sparked LSU to victory.

The offense suddenly started to click.

"I think I drew a little attention when I got back from [the] injury, and it kind of helped our offense flow a little bit, helped the young guys get open," Doucet says.

"I'm not caught up in individual goals or personal goals or anything like that. If you take care of the team goals, then the individual stuff will come with that."

The Tigers fought their way back into the BCS title picture, and when Doucet found the end zone in the third quarter of the national championship game against Ohio State, LSU had officially pulled away with the title. And his first-round draft stock again seemed secure.

—Mike Giglio

**Strengths:** A good athlete with speed and a nice frame. Moves well through traffic to catch tough passes. Gets off the snap quickly.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw. Never maximized his potential in college. Must improve his route-running skills and work harder on every down.

**Bottom line:** Brown has talent, but he never reached his potential at Oregon State. At best, he is training-camp filler.

2008 CLASS GRADE:

**B-**

# TIGHT ENDS

**W**hile the early entry of Texas A&M's Martellus Bennett has helped the quality of tight ends in this year's draft, this group is not very strong in terms of elite prospects. However, it does have good depth. No tight end jumps out with first-round talent, as a number of players must overcome questions to reach their potential.

Bennett is a big, strong tight end with all-around athleticism. He has the ability to be a very good blocker and receiver, but has not shown the elite athleticism to make big plays down the field as a receiver. Tennessee's Brad Cottam is the most interesting of the prospects because of his uncommon combination of elite size, strength and natural athleticism. To become successful, however, he must stay healthy.

Missouri's Martin Rucker is a tall tight end with very good hands who plays a very similar style of football to Jacksonville's Marcedes Lewis. Michigan State's Kellen Davis has talent and all the physical tools to be an NFL starter, but to do so he needs to become more aggressive and consistent.

Two other tight ends who have real potential are Texas' Jermichael Finley and Oklahoma's Joe Jon Finley (who are not related). Jermichael is more of a bulked-up receiver, while Joe Jon has the size to be a good in-line blocker.

One sleeper is Northwest Missouri State's Mike Peterson, who was overlooked during the 2007 postseason all-star games. At 6-2, he lacks ideal height, but has very good playing speed and excellent hands, which gives him a chance to make an impact in the NFL if he can improve his technique and adjust to the huge jump in competition.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-6	265	4.55
NFL Minimum	6-2	235	4.95

The ideal tight end has the size and strength to open holes in the running game and the hands and speed to be a reliable receiving threat. Most teams carry receiving and blocking tight ends. Receivers have the speed to create mismatches against linebackers and the size and leaping ability to beat defensive backs downfield. Blocking tight ends use their size, strength and technique to good effect.

## 2007 DRAFT

TIGHT ENDS TAKEN: 12

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	1	1	1	2	3	0	4

**Potential and depth reign supreme, but don't expect immediate star power**



MARTELLUS BENNETT

## 2ND ROUND

### 1 MARTELLUS BENNETT\*

&gt; TEXAS A&amp;M

6-7	253	4.60	FINAL GRADE	7.5
	Avg	Yds	Rectd	
2005	9.0	162	3	
2006	13.1	497	3	
2007	12.0	587	4	

**NFL comparison:** Jason Witten, Cowboys**Hands:** Is a natural. Shows good body control and coordination to adjust and make tough catches.Displays the hand strength to hold the ball after a hard hit. **Grade: 8.0****Patterns:** Runs good routes consistently. Is smooth and fluid. Uses quick footwork, agility and athleticism to cut quickly and separate from defender. Works through contact. Shows the acceleration and speed to get down the seam and stretch the field. **Grade: 7.5****Run after catch:** Is a strong, competitive runner. Fights for yardage. Shows the balance and strength to absorb hard hits and keep on going. Lacks explosive speed to outrun the defense and score on long touchdowns. **Grade: 7.0****Release:** Uses quickness to burst off the snap, but is not explosive enough to get behind the defender immediately. **Grade: 6.5****Blocking:** Has the size and strength to eliminate a target once he gets his hands on him. **Grade: 6.5****Bottom line:** Bennett has the uncommon ability to become a dominant blocker and good receiver. He is not a deep threat like Cleveland's Kellen Winslow or San Diego's Antonio Gates, but will be a receiving threat who uses his strength and athleticism to make plays after the catch. Bennett will probably need a season before his impact and ability match up.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How TIGHT ENDS are graded:** **Hands:** Concentration, snatches, soft hands. **Routes:** Sharp and crisp, body control, fakes, cuts. **Catch long and short:** Possession, acceleration, can go deep. **Run after catch:** Threat, catches in stride, elusive. **Blocker:** Willing, good results, sustains, open field. **Release:** Can avoid jam, not held up, physical. **Reacts to the ball in a crowd:** Comes over the middle, shows toughness. **Initial quickness:** Accelerates, gets off the ball, has extra gear.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

Note: Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 3RD ROUND

### 2 MARTIN RUCKER

> MISSOURI

6-4 1/4	248	4.78	FINAL GRADE	<b>6.9</b>
Avg	Yds	Rectd		
2004	13.8	263	4	
2005	12.1	567	1	
2006	9.6	511	5	
2007	9.9	834	8	

NFL comparison: Marcedes Lewis, Jaguars

**Strengths:** Is tall with surprising athleticism. Shows excellent hands to reach out and pluck passes at full speed. Is tough going across the middle, absorbing hard hits and holding onto the ball. Shields defenders well and catches high passes, making him especially dangerous in short-yardage and red-zone situations.

**Weaknesses:** Is an upright runner, causing his routes to be raw and choppy. Struggles to get in and out of cuts quickly enough to gain separation. Does not explode off the snap into his route. Is more of a positional run blocker who lacks strength and aggressiveness to move the pile. Has a bad habit of catching the ball against his body, and thus



### SKILL SET

#### BIGGEST DEEP THREAT

Brad Cottam > Tennessee

While Cottam may not have the fastest 40 time, he possesses good speed for his size, which, combined with his great height and tremendous hands, allows him to make big plays down the field.

#### BEST RECEIVER

Jermichael Finley > Texas

Finley possesses the size and skills of a wide receiver; he runs solid routes, gets open easily and has good hands.

#### BEST HANDS

John Carlson > Notre Dame

Carlson is a fundamentally sound receiver who does a good job of plucking the ball with his hands.

#### MOST DANGEROUS AFTER THE CATCH

Mike Peterson > Northwest Missouri State

Peterson has the speed to make big plays while also consistently breaking tackles and gaining yards after contact.

#### MOST DOMINANT BLOCKER

Andy Boyd > South Carolina

Boyd consistently locks up on a defender fast and has the strength to move and eliminate an opposing player with ease.

drops easy passes. Must add 15 pounds of bulk.

**Bottom line:** The brother of Panthers defensive end Mike Rucker, Martin has the athletic tools to be a good NFL starter. His stock should continue to rise up until the draft.

### 3 BRAD COTTAM

> TENNESSEE

6-4 1/4	271	4.75	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>6.5</b>
Avg	Yds	Rectd			
2004	17.0	34	0		
2005	13.0	182	0		
2007	25.0	125	1		

NFL comparison: Todd Heap, Ravens

**Strengths:** Is huge with a solid build. Has the power and strength to be a dominant run blocker. Can quickly break through to block linebackers. Runs smooth, fluid routes. Is good at getting his head and hands around when coming out of cuts to easily catch quick-arriving passes. Adjusts easily to catch high passes.

**Weaknesses:** Is a durability risk, as he missed 11 games as a senior because of left-wrist surgery, and also had thumb surgery in 2004. Doesn't explode off the snap.

**Bottom line:** Cottam is intriguing because of his size and skill, but teams are wary of his injury history. He could become a good NFL starter, but history says oft-injured college players struggle to stay healthy in the pros as well.

### 4 KELLEN DAVIS

> MICHIGAN STATE

6-6 1/4	259	4.75	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>6.5</b>
Avg	Yds	Rectd			
2004	29.0	29	0		
2005	17.4	122	2		
2006	10.4	125	1		
2007	39.5	513	6		

NFL comparison: Bubba Franks, Packers

**Strengths:** Is a physical specimen with good speed and functional strength. Runs solid routes and uses his size well. Shows good flexibility to get low for short passes or go up high for tall ones. Is strong at the point of attack. Runs hard after the catch. Is incredibly versatile, having played offense and defense in 2007. Shows the size and post-up ability to be a nice red-zone target.

**Weaknesses:** Does not always play all-out and will take plays off. Fails to finish blocks with power. Must get stronger. Lacks concentration, dropping easy passes when looking to run before securing the ball.

**Bottom line:** Davis proved his status as one of the best athletes in the draft by playing both tight end and defensive end last year for the Spartans. He has a perfect body for an NFL tight end.

### 5 JERMICHAEL FINLEY\*

> TEXAS

6-5	236	4.60	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>6.0</b>
Avg	Yds	Rectd			
2006	12.0	372	3		
2007	12.8	575	2		

NFL comparison: Tony Scheffler, Broncos

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete. Shows the quickness and speed to make plays. Gets off the snap and into routes quickly. Is fast enough to get down the seam to pressure the defense. Is able to make tough catches seem routine.

**Weaknesses:** Is one-dimensional, contributing only as a receiver. Must work harder as a blocker. Is an

oversized receiver without a tight end's toughness or aggressiveness.

**Bottom line:** Finley should have stayed in school. He can make plays as a receiver, but needs a lot of work on his blocking. Teams should not over draft him, as he is a much better athlete than player.

## 4TH ROUND

### 6 JOE JON FINLEY

> OKLAHOMA

6-6 1/4	256	4.80	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>5.9</b>
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**Strengths:** Is big and muscular. Can make an impact as a receiver and blocker. Shows good hands to make tough catches, especially with a defender on his back. Is a strong and competitive runner after the catch. Gains yardage after contact.

**Weaknesses:** Must become a more aggressive blocker. Lacks ideal flexibility. Doesn't block with good leverage. Must get into his route faster and avoid jams.

**Bottom line:** Finley looks the part of a pro tight end. He boosted his draft stock with a strong week of practice at the East-West Shrine Game, showing better speed and receiving skills than expected. After a season or two as a backup, he could become a solid NFL starter.

### 7 DUSTIN KELLER

> PURDUE

6-2 1/4	250	4.70	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>5.9</b>
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**Strengths:** Shows good speed, quickness and athletic ability. Runs solid routes, and explodes in and out of breaks. Is productive on short and downfield routes. Adjusts his body well to get open, and knows when to settle in an opening and create a target for the quarterback.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks lower- and upper-body strength. Can get held up at the line. Is a poor blocker who doesn't play with good technique or effort. Lacks natural hands.

**Bottom line:** Although he doesn't have the best hands, Keller is a productive tight end who always finds a way to make a play. He is also a converted wide receiver, and it shows in terms of his blocking. Keller needs to land in the right offense to be successful in the NFL. He is a third- to fourth-round prospect with the potential to move up.

### 8 FRED DAVIS

> USC

6-2 1/4	250	4.75	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>5.8</b>
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**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with impressive hands. Finds openings in zone coverage. Doesn't hesitate to catch passes in traffic, holding the ball while taking a hit. Runs hard after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** He's often a step slow off the snap into his route. Must play with more intensity and passion. Technical inconsistencies raise questions about his work habits and learning ability.

**Bottom line:** Davis lacks the attention his play merits. He can make big catches, but the ability to make an impact by lining up in various locations is a big part of his value. Davis should become an NFL starter with improved work habits.

### 9 JOEY HAYNOS

> MARYLAND

6-7 1/4	252	4.75	+	FINAL GRADE	<b>5.8</b>
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**Strengths:** Is athletic and versatile, producing as a blocker and receiver. Gets into his route and

accelerates to full speed quickly. Shows deceptive speed to get open down the seam and make plays downfield. Runs good routes and consistently separates from defenders.

**Weaknesses:** Is a little thin. Lacks the dominant strength to consistently create movement on in-line run blocks, and doesn't break many tackles. Must improve his release to negate jams by linebackers.

**Bottom line:** Haynos is a player who impacts games over time. He shows the versatility to line up as an in-line tight end, H-back, wingback, fullback or wide receiver. Haynos will eventually be a good all-around tight end.

## 10 CRAIG STEVENS

> CALIFORNIA

6-3 1/4 255 4.79

FINAL GRADE 5.6

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Works hard and uses good technique to maximize his ability. Is a smooth and fluid athlete. Is a competitive runner after the catch, keeping his feet moving to drag would-be tacklers for extra yardage.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks explosiveness and speed to make big plays. Struggles to consistently separate, and will have more trouble against NFL defenders. Does not break many tackles. Is not an aggressive fire-off-the-ball run blocker, and cannot consistently drive his man off the line.

**Bottom line:** Stevens is a good all-around tight end who doesn't impress anyone, but has many of the traits to make it in the NFL. He projects as a backup

who will probably become a starter down the road because of his consistency.

## 11 MIKE PETERSON

> NORTHWEST MISSOURI STATE

6-2 1/4 250 4.68

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, acceleration and speed to stretch the field and make big plays. Catches passes in traffic, absorbs hard hits and holds onto the ball. Is a strong and competitive runner who consistently gains yardage after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Is jammed too easily by linebackers. Lacks ideal bulk, hindering his ability to get movement on straight-ahead run blocks. Hasn't faced elite competition.

**Bottom line:** Peterson isn't an elite prospect, but has the receiving skills to make it in the pros. With improved technique and ability to escape jams, Peterson could become a good NFL starter. Otherwise, he'll make a fine backup tight end who also contributes as an H-back and fullback.

## 5TH ROUND

## 12 ADAM BISHOP

> NEVADA

6-5 1/4 241 4.80

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a hard-nosed player who loves the game. Has a high football IQ. Concentrates in traffic and is not afraid to go over the middle. Shows

good body control. Uses his size well to shield defenders away from the ball. Blocks aggressively. Shows good lateral quickness and plays stronger than he looks.

**Weaknesses:** Must add bulk and improve his hip flexibility; can be thrown around when he gets high as a blocker. Struggles some as a receiver when defenders jam or re-route him.

**Bottom line:** Bishop is a big target in the red zone and a solid blocker. If Bishop adds some strength and bulk, he will likely get drafted late and stick around the NFL for a long time.

## 13 JOHN CARLSON

> NOTRE DAME

6-5 254 4.90

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a smart, instinctive receiver who finds a way to get open and make clutch catches. Runs precise routes. Uses his hands well to push off defenders and consistently makes catches with defenders climbing over his back. Shows the hands, concentration and body control to adjust and catch off-target throws. Runs hard after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Is only an adequate athlete; lacks the quickness and explosiveness to make big plays downfield. Really struggles to block aggressive defenders. Falls off too many blocks. Lacks the power to break tackles.

**Bottom line:** Carlson usually plays to the limit of his ability. He makes clutch catches, but must show significant improvement in his blocking technique and play more aggressively to be more than just

## IN PROFILE

### MARTIN RUCKER

MISSOURI

**B**y now, the Rucker family must be used to the spotlight. In 2004, Martin T. Rucker won a seat on the Missouri House of Representatives after almost three decades as an assembly-line mechanic for Silgan Container Corporation in St. Joseph, where he and his wife raised four boys. One son, Mike, has spent the last nine years in the NFL at defensive end for the Carolina Panthers after winning national titles with Nebraska in 1995 and '97.

Now, it's the youngest son's turn. Martin Rucker wrapped up his college career this past season by helping Missouri to its highest-ever finish (fourth) in the final Associated Press poll. The Tigers also won a school-record 12 games and their first Big 12 North title (since the designation of the two divisions in 1996), capping the season by trouncing Arkansas 38-7 in the Cotton Bowl.

The 6-4, 248-pound tight end caught 84 passes for 834 yards and eight touchdowns en route to first-team All-America honors last season. He started every game (a school-record 50) in his

four-year career at Missouri, and owned the Tiger marks for most career catches and yards at his position before the first snap of 2007.

When asked what he's learned from his father's newfound career in the public eye, Rucker gives a fitting answer for a player expected to be one of the first selected at his position in the 2008 draft: "You've always got to be on your toes."

Perhaps a familiarity with the spotlight made Rucker more willing to share it, which played a crucial role in Missouri's success. Over the past three seasons, he and Chase Coffman, now a senior, formed the most productive tight-end duo in the country. Coffman has averaged 52 catches, 554.7 yards and 6.7 touchdowns over that time, while Rucker averaged

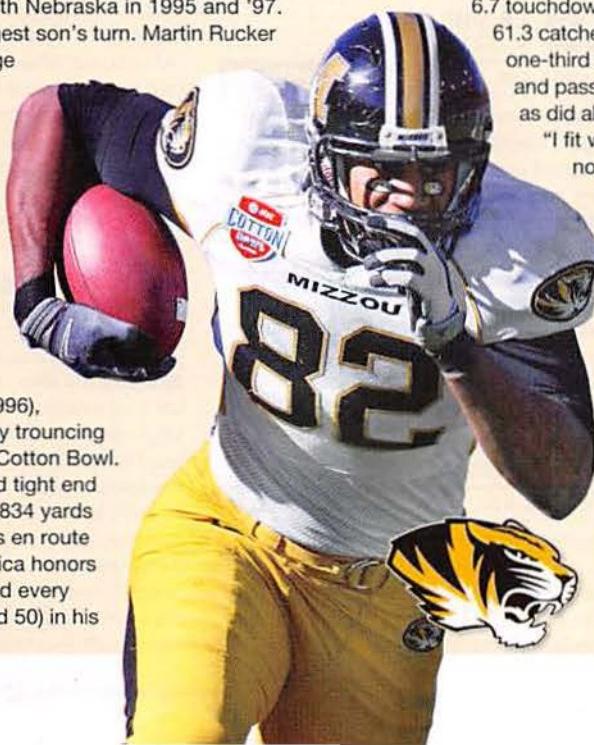
61.3 catches, 637.3 yards and 4.6 scores. Roughly one-third of quarterback Chase Daniel's completions and passing yards went to the tight-end spot in 2007, as did almost half of his touchdowns.

"I fit well with other people," Rucker says. "I'm not one to hog the spotlight or anything like that, or get envious of someone else who's in it if I'm not. I wasn't raised that way."

Though questions about his bulk and run blocking remain, Rucker will likely be counted on to man his position alone at the next level, as NFL clubs do not usually carry two star tight ends. Oakland's Lane Kiffin, who coached Rucker at this year's Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala., came away impressed with his sure hands and fluid routes, calling him a "big-time asset to the passing game."

If Rucker can carry those skills to the next level, he should at last have the chance to stand out—both at his position and within his family.

—Mike Giglio



an NFL backup who contributes primarily as a short-to-intermediate receiver.

## 14 JACOB TAMME

> KENTUCKY

FINAL GRADE 5.3

**Strengths:** Is a smart, efficient blocker and fluid athlete. Gets off the snap and into good blocking position quickly. Can make tough catches with the defender on his back. Shows good hands to reach out and pluck passes away from his body. Does not hesitate to catch passes in traffic. Runs hard after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the quick burst and speed to make big plays downfield or gain separation on short routes. Cannot stretch the field. Lacks the bulk and strength to drive his man; does not get movement on in-line run blocks.

**Bottom line:** Tamme caught a lot of passes at Kentucky, but will struggle to match that productivity in the NFL because of his lack of explosiveness and speed. He could be a good backup tight end who contributes as a receiver on short routes and as a positional blocker.

## 15 GARY BARNIDGE

> LOUISVILLE

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive. Consistently makes good in-line run blocks, pinning defensive ends inside and driving defensive linemen down the line on side blocks. Runs smart and sharp routes. Makes tough catches with defenders on his back. Is a strong and competitive runner after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete who lacks quickness, explosiveness and speed. Must add upper-body strength to play as strong in the NFL as he did in college.

**Bottom line:** Barnidge lacks the explosiveness and speed that NFL teams covet, but he's an elite blocker and someone who finds a way to get open. Barnidge is an ideal backup who should serve mostly as a blocker and short-yardage receiver.

## 16 COLE BENNETT

> AUBURN

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and consistently plays to the limits of his ability. Looks and plays bigger than his measured size would suggest. Shows good hands to reach out and pluck passes away from his body. Fights for every yard after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Lacks the quickness, explosiveness and speed to stretch the field and make big plays. Does not explode off the snap into routes; can be jammed by linebackers.

**Bottom line:** Bennett, who missed 10 games in 2006 with an ankle injury, came back with a strong senior season. He does not project as an NFL starter, but would be an ideal backup who contributes as a blocker and short-yardage receiver.

## 6TH ROUND

## 17 JONATHAN STUPAR

> VIRGINIA

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Has a good build. Consistently seals his man on in-line run blocks. Pass-blocks with good leverage, and slides well laterally to maintain blocks. Shows good hands to catch off-target passes. Taps

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

**Joe Jon Finley** > Oklahoma

After an excellent week at the East-West Shrine Game, Finley has jumped up on many draft boards.

### ON THE DECLINE

**John Carlson** > Notre Dame

After entering his senior year viewed by many as a first- or second-round draft pick, Carlson slid a bit with a disappointing final season.

### SLEEPER

**Mike Peterson** > Northwest Missouri State

Peterson has not received a lot of national attention, but with his burst of acceleration, playing speed, hands and run-after-the-catch ability, he has the tools to make an impact in the NFL.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

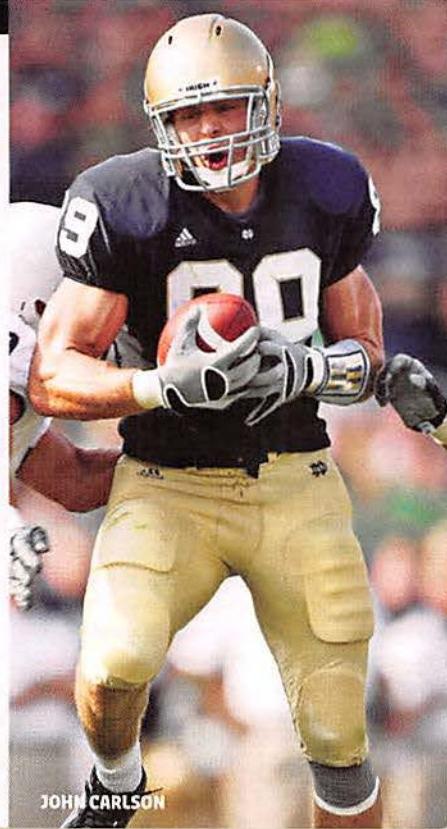
**Kellen Davis** > Michigan State

Davis would be among the competition for the top tight end in the 2008 draft if he played with more passion and intensity.

### BIGGEST RISK

**Brad Cottam** > Tennessee

While Cottam has first-round ability and the size and tools to be an elite NFL tight end, his injury problems in college pose a major concern.



JOHN CARLSON

feet down inbounds nicely on sideline catches.

**Weaknesses:** Is not an explosive athlete; lacks the burst and speed to get behind the defense or separate downfield. His weight isn't ideal. After the catch, he doesn't break tackles. Lacks the speed to score long touchdowns or make big plays.

**Bottom line:** Stupar will never be an explosive receiver, but his greatest asset is an ability to be productive in all areas and make few mental errors. Even if he's not drafted, Stupar should make it as an H-back, backup tight end or backup fullback.

## 7TH ROUND

## 18 J.B. PHILLIPS

> NEBRASKA

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is solidly built. Bends his knees to block with good leverage. Consistently shows the hands, body control and concentration to catch off-target passes. Runs hard after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks big-play quickness or speed, as well as the bulk to move defensive ends consistently in the running game. Doesn't have the strength to consistently break tackles.

**Bottom line:** Phillips is a "jack of all trades, master of none" prospect. He could be worth a late-round pick because of his versatility as a backup tight end or fullback or starting H-back.

## 19 TOM SANTI

> VIRGINIA

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and versatile; he can play as an in-line tight end, H-back, wingback or fullback. Shows good hands to catch off-target passes. Absorbs hard hits and holds on to the ball.

**Weaknesses:** Is just an adequate athlete. Lacks the

quickness and speed to make big plays. Doesn't break tackles after the catch.

**Bottom line:** Santi is the type of prospect who often gets overvalued because of his versatility and college production. He projects as a good NFL backup who can contribute in a variety of alignments.

## 20 DEREK FINE

> KANSAS

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is a receiving tight end with soft hands. Can make tough catches look easy. Shows good instincts and football smarts. Gets off the line quickly. Understands how to get open, especially against zone coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and a bit light. Lacks speed and quickness. Really struggles to separate from good man-to-man coverage.

**Bottom line:** Fine is short for a tight end, but has enough intangibles to play H-back in the NFL. With better measurable skills, he would rank higher.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENT

## 21 ANDY BOYD

> SOUTH CAROLINA

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a strong and competitive blocker who has great technique. Shows good hands to make tough catches with defenders on his back. Is a tough and competitive runner after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Shows limited quickness, hindering his ability to make plays as a receiver. Lacks burst out of cuts to gain separation.

**Bottom line:** Boyd is a common tight end prospect—a good blocker who lacks the quickness and speed to make plays as a receiver. He could switch to offensive tackle if able to add weight.

2008 CLASS GRADE:

**A**

# OFFENSIVE TACKLES

The 2008 class of offensive tackles is one of the best in the last decade, and should have at least three players drafted during the first round and possibly as many as 10 in the first two rounds. Unlike recent drafts in which the top player was clearly a notch above the rest, this year there are three tackles who are at the top of NFL teams' rankings. The most well known is Michigan tackle Jake Long, but Boise State's Ryan Clady and Vanderbilt's Chris Williams are just as good (if not better).

From our scouts' grades, the top spot is a basically a tie between Clady and Williams, depending on the type of offensive lineman a team needs. For those looking for an athletic tackle who can get out into space to block well but isn't a physically dominant run-blocker, Clady is the guy. Williams, on the other hand, fits the profile of teams that want a player with great size, long arms and the ability to be a very good pass blocker, but doesn't quite have elite athleticism.

Long isn't too far behind and remains one of the safest bets in this year's draft because he's been very productive in a major program since stepping into the starting lineup. He can be a solid right or left tackle and will help his team tremendously thanks to an outstanding work ethic and intangibles.

After that, there is a bevy of prospects who will likely cause a raucous debate in NFL war rooms as to who will make it and who will flop. Sleepers who will go late in the draft and eventually become good starters include Middle Tennessee State's Franklin Dunbar, Texas A&M's Corey Clark and Central Florida's Josh Sitton.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-7	335	5.00
NFL Minimum	6-3	290	5.30

Right and left tackles rarely share similar skills. The left tackle protects the quarterback's blind side (unless the QB is lefthanded). He must have the athletic ability and quickness to handle speed rushers coming off the edge and the base to anchor against the bull rush. The right tackle must have an explosive first step and the leg drive to get movement in the running game. Tackles who do the job well in both areas are rare.

## 2007 DRAFT

OFFENSIVE TACKLES TAKEN: 22

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	3	1	4	2	2	5	5

Look for this position to be called early and often in the first two rounds



RYAN CLADY

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 RYAN CLADY\*

&gt; BOISE STATE

6-6 319 4.90

FINAL GRADE 8.4

**NFL comparison:** Chris Samuels, Redskins

**Run blocking:** Does not fire off the snap and drive his man off the line. Reaches defensive linemen quickly and stays after blocks. Struggles to work around shaded defensive linemen (an inside-shaded tackle or a wide-aligned end) to make reach blocks. Drives defensive linemen down the line on side blocks. Reaches the second level quickly. Pulls and leads on perimeter runs. **Grade: 7.5**

**Pass blocking:** Needs some technique work, but is great at protecting the quarterback's blind side. Shows quick footwork to slide outside and cut off edge rushers with ease. Has the agility and athleticism to redirect and slide back inside to neutralize double moves to the inside. Must better use his hand punch to keep power rushers out of his chest. When jolted, he shows the athleticism and footwork to reset and hold his ground. After making contact with edge rushers, he too often stops shuffling his feet and thus crosses over to chase defenders around the corner. **Grade: 8.5**

**Initial quickness:** Anticipates the snap well and is quick out of his stance. Slides quickly to the corner to cut off edge rushers. Makes contact with defensive linemen quickly on in-line run blocks, and reaches linebackers in a flash. **Grade: 9.0**

**Strength:** Is a bit thin, but has good natural strength. When failing to use his hand punch effectively, he can be jolted backward by bull rushers. Does not move the pile on straight ahead runs. Once locked onto defensive linemen, he snaps his hips to torque them off their feet. **Grade: 7.5**

**Mobility:** Shows the quickness and athleticism to get off the snap and through the line to deliver a blow to linebackers and to pull and lead on perimeter runs. After delivering initial blow in the open field, he keeps his knees bent, maintains good balance and sustains the block. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Clady, a junior, has the rare athleticism to become an elite NFL left tackle. He is competitive and works to the whistle. To maximize his skills, Clady must focus on using good technique on every play. Look for him to move past better-known offensive tackles on draft boards around the league. He should start early in his NFL career and eventually become a Pro Bowl player.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How OFFENSIVE TACKLES are graded:** **Initial quickness:** Comes off the ball, beats defensive linemen. **Run blocking:** Leverage, control, balance. **Pass blocking:** Feet, setup, mirrors, adjusts in space. **Pulls and traps:** Hits moving targets, adjusts in space. **Use of hands:** Gets separation, keeps defensive linemen off, leverage. **Strength:** Leverage, moves the pile, can anchor. **Explosion:** Finishes block, plays low, has pop.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 2 CHRIS WILLIAMS

> VANDERBILT

6-6 1/2 320 5.25 FINAL GRADE 8.2

**NFL comparison:** Willie Anderson, Bengals

**Run blocking:** Gets his hands on defenders, drives into them with low pad level and keeps his back flat to maintain good leverage. Lacks a nasty disposition to finish blocks with power. **Grade: 8.0**

**Pass blocking:** Kicks off the line and bends his knees to slide laterally with ease. Is adept at waiting until the last second to deliver a good hand punch to pass rushers, but could be more forceful. Mirrors and slides well to counter pass rushers' moves. Holds up well against bull rushers. **Grade: 8.5**

**Initial quickness:** Gets in proper position in the running and passing games. Is quick and hustles; always seems to be in the right position. **Grade: 7.5**

**Strength:** Shows only average playing strength. Is too much of a finesse player. Lacks explosiveness. **Grade: 7.5**

**Mobility:** Shows good quickness and speed. Is a good open-field blocker, showing great flexibility. Does not pull often, but has the athletic ability to hit moving targets. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** A smart player with sound technique, Williams really impressed NFL coaches and general managers at the Senior Bowl. He should be a top-15 pick.



CHRIS WILLIAMS

## 4 TONY HILLS

> TEXAS

6-5 1/2 309 4.90 FINAL GRADE 7.5

**NFL comparison:** Tony Ugoh, Colts

**Run blocking:** Drives defensive linemen down the line on side blocks; shows the strength to collapse the line. When leading outside runs, he often struggles to maintain balance and block moving targets. **Grade: 6.5**

**Pass blocking:** Has all the tools to be great, but gets beaten by lesser foes because of inconsistent effort and bad technique. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet upon contact. **Grade: 7.0**

**Initial quickness:** Gets out of his stance and into set quickly. Slides out to the corner to cut off speed rushers, but must improve technique and aggressiveness. Fires out of his stance to pull and lead on perimeter runs. **Grade: 7.5**

**Strength:** When blocking with leverage and using his hands aggressively, he stands up power rushers. On run blocks, he usually fails to fire off the snap aggressively, limiting his ability to play strong at the point of attack. **Grade: 8.0**

**Mobility:** Flashes the ability to be dominant, but too often is lazy with technique. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet before contact, often overextending and whiffing. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** Hills was a top-flight tight end in high school but switched to offensive tackle at Texas and didn't become a starter until 2006. Although he's still learning the nuances of the position, his play definitely improved as a senior before he broke his leg. Hills could slip down draft boards, but in time he should become a good NFL left tackle.

## 3 JAKE LONG

> MICHIGAN

6-7 325 5.35 FINAL GRADE 7.9

**NFL comparison:** Ryan Tucker, Browns

**Run blocking:** Can be a dominant in-line run blocker. Fires off the snap aggressively on side blocks to drive defensive linemen out of the play. Makes mini-pulls nicely, but lacks the speed to lead perimeter runs. **Grade: 8.0**

**Pass blocking:** Does a good job when using his hands aggressively, jolting defensive ends upright. Works well with teammates to neutralize line stunts and delayed blitzes. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet upon contact and gets beaten by secondary pass-rush moves. **Grade: 7.0**

**Initial quickness:** Anticipates the snap well, but lacks the quickness to make it to the corner to cut off speed rushers. Moves quickly off the snap on in-line run blocks, delivering a hard initial blow. **Grade: 7.5**

**Strength:** Is naturally strong. When getting his hands on defensive ends first, he holds his ground against any bull rusher. Too often, though, he is beaten by aggressive power rushers who drive him into the quarterback. **Grade: 8.5**

**Mobility:** Doesn't have ideal athleticism, and often compensates with instincts and competitiveness. Lacks speed, but is effective on pulls as long as the defender stays on his track. **Grade: 6.0**

**Bottom line:** Long is one of the most hyped prospects in years. He lacks the athleticism to be a premier NFL left tackle but could become a solid left tackle or an elite right tackle. He's a first-round lock because NFL coaches like tough, smart linemen who were productive at big-time schools.

## 2ND ROUND

## 3 JAKE LONG

> MICHIGAN

6-7 325 5.35 FINAL GRADE 7.9

**NFL comparison:** Ryan Tucker, Browns

**Run blocking:** Can be a dominant in-line run blocker. Fires off the snap aggressively on side blocks to drive defensive linemen out of the play. Makes mini-pulls nicely, but lacks the speed to lead perimeter runs. **Grade: 8.0**

**Pass blocking:** Does a good job when using his hands aggressively, jolting defensive ends upright. Works well with teammates to neutralize line stunts and delayed blitzes. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet upon contact and gets beaten by secondary pass-rush moves. **Grade: 7.0**

**Initial quickness:** Anticipates the snap well, but lacks the quickness to make it to the corner to cut off speed rushers. Moves quickly off the snap on in-line run blocks, delivering a hard initial blow. **Grade: 7.5**

**Strength:** Is naturally strong. When getting his hands on defensive ends first, he holds his ground against any bull rusher. Too often, though, he is beaten by aggressive power rushers who drive him into the quarterback. **Grade: 8.5**

**Mobility:** Doesn't have ideal athleticism, and often compensates with instincts and competitiveness. Lacks speed, but is effective on pulls as long as the defender stays on his track. **Grade: 6.0**

**Bottom line:** Long is one of the most hyped prospects in years. He lacks the athleticism to be a premier NFL left tackle but could become a solid left tackle or an elite right tackle. He's a first-round lock because NFL coaches like tough, smart linemen who were productive at big-time schools.

## 5 JEFF OTAH

> PITTSBURGH

6-6 1/2 338 5.35 FINAL GRADE 7.0

**NFL comparison:** Jason Peters, Bills

**Run blocking:** Does not fire off the ball and attack. Shows the size and strength to lock up defensive linemen, but does not always block with good leverage. Doesn't get good position to make reach blocks. **Grade: 7.5**

**Pass blocking:** Slides to the corner to neutralize edge rushers. Uses long, strong arms to tie up pass rushers. Can slide quickly to neutralize delayed blitzes and line stunts, but does not do so consistently. **Grade: 7.0**

**Initial quickness:** Gets out of his stance quickly and shows the footwork and athleticism to slide to the corner and cut off speed rushers. Lacks

great initial quickness to handle elite NFL speed rushers. **Grade: 7.5**

**Strength:** When playing with leverage in pass protection and getting his hands on defensive linemen quickly, he has the strength to stop bull rushers in their tracks. Despite not firing off the snap aggressively, he can control defensive linemen on run blocks. **Grade: 8.0**

**Mobility:** Shoves defensive ends aside and reaches the second level to block linebackers, but is inconsistent. Struggles to adjust to moving targets in the open field. **Grade: 6.5**

**Bottom line:** Otahe, a junior-college transfer who played two seasons at Pitt, struggles to maintain good technique or awareness. He looks more like a starting right tackle based on his height, long arms and thick lower body, but could become a left tackle with more consistent technique.

## 6 KING DUNLAP

> AUBURN

6-8 1/2 309 5.06 FINAL GRADE 7.0

**NFL comparison:** Wayne Gandy, Falcons

**Run blocking:** Shows the size and competitiveness to drive defensive linemen down the line on side blocks. Struggles to adjust and block moving targets in the open field. **Grade: 6.5**

**Pass blocking:** Uses good leverage to stay under control. Slides to the corner to cut off speed rushers. Is smart and works well with teammates to neutralize line stunts. **Grade: 7.5**

**Initial quickness:** Gets out of his stance quickly to slide outside and cut off edge rushers. Gets down to cut block defensive ends on quick-hit passes. Struggles to get around shaded defensive linemen to execute reach blocks. **Grade: 7.0**

**Strength:** Shows excellent strength. When aggressive, he torques defenders off their feet, but does not always play that way. Struggles to run block with leverage, often bending at his waist and leaning on defenders. **Grade: 6.0**

**Mobility:** Makes short pulls around the tight end and blocks defenders on his track, but lacks the speed and quickness to make long pulls. Struggles to adjust and block on the move. **Grade: 8.0**

**Bottom line:** Dunlap's play was inconsistent during his college career. He has rare height and long arms but must learn to use his hands more effectively. Dunlap has the talent to be a good NFL starter at left or right tackle but should spend a season as a backup while improving his technique.

## 3RD ROUND

**7 GOSDER CHERILUS**  
► BOSTON COLLEGE

6-6 315 5.15 FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** Ephraim Salaam, Texans

**Strengths:** Is massive, with long arms and good strength and athleticism. Shows quick enough footwork to slide to the corner to cut off edge rushers. Gets through line quickly to deliver a good initial blow to linebackers.

**Weaknesses:** Does not maximize skills because of inconsistent technique. In pass protection, he gets upright and straight-legged too often, hindering his ability to shuffle and slide. Does not fire off the snap to drive defensive linemen backward.

**Bottom line:** Cherilus can be dominant when using good technique and aggressiveness. He doesn't project as an elite tackle but should be a good starter on the left or right side.

**8 DUANE BROWN**  
► VIRGINIA TECH

6-4 314 5.02 FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** John Tait, Bears

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the footwork and speed to reach the open field with ease. Has long arms. Slides outside to cut off speed rushers. Is a good blocker in the open field when playing under control and maintaining balance.

**Weaknesses:** Plays too upright and straight-legged, hindering his strength and ability to mirror pass rushers. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet upon contact, falling off blocks. Is not an aggressive run blocker. Struggles to block moving targets.

**Bottom line:** Brown is one of the more athletic offensive linemen in the 2008 draft but must dramatically improve his technique and aggressiveness. He has first-round talent, but teams should be wary of drafting him too high because his on-field play rarely matches his natural ability.

**9 CHAD RINEHART**  
► NORTHERN IOWA

6-5 317 5.31 FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** Marc Colombo, Cowboys

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with rare quickness for his size. Slides outside to cut off speed rushers. Switches off well with teammates to neutralize line stunts. Fires off the snap aggressively to deliver a hard initial blow. Is tough and competitive.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to play up to his talent because of sloppy footwork and technique. Shows inconsistent footwork when sliding out to the corner. Gets upright in the open field and struggles to be consistent.

**Bottom line:** Like many small-school prospects, Rinehart got by on athleticism in college and did not develop consistent technique. Athletic tackles with the footwork to block speed rushers are rare, so Rinehart is sure to be drafted more on potential than on-field production.

**10 SAM BAKER**  
► USC

6-4 308 5.20 FINAL GRADE 6.0

**NFL comparison:** Robert Gallery, Raiders

**Strengths:** Is tall and athletic with the quickness and long arms to be an effective pass blocker. Gets

out of his stance and set quickly. Is instinctive, working well with others to stymie blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Too often stops moving his feet upon contact in pass protection, getting beat far too easily by secondary moves. Was limited by a hamstring problem in 2007.

**Bottom line:** Baker, the son of Arena League commissioner David Baker, has received a lot of publicity, but much of it is unwarranted. He is nowhere near as good as he should be. Baker's inconsistent play is a big concern and could cause him to slide down NFL teams' draft boards.

## 4TH ROUND

**11 FRANKLIN DUNBAR\***  
► MIDDLE TENNESSEE

6-5 350 5.30 FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness to slide outside to cut off explosive edge rushers. Gets his hands on defensive ends quickly, and



## SKILL SET

## ► BEST PASS BLOCKER

Ryan Clady > Boise State

Clady is an elite athlete for a 319-pound tackle who can slide out to protect the corner with ease and then redirect and slide quickly to cut off explosive inside pass rush moves.

## ► BEST RUN BLOCKER

Jake Long > Michigan

It isn't always pretty, but Long consistently gets after his man very quickly and aggressively and eliminates him from the play.

## ► MOST ATHLETIC

King Dunlap > Auburn

Dunlap struggled through a miserable senior season, but is still a premier athlete for a 6-8 tackle who has the talent to be a top NFL player.

## ► PLAYING STRENGTH

Chris Williams > Vanderbilt

Williams is massive and has the physical strength to dominate his man once he gets hold of him, and already has better strength than most NFL tackles.

## ► MOST VERSATILE

Chad Rinehart > Northern Iowa

Has the skills to play tackle and the combination of strength and athleticism to switch to guard or center.

shows the strength to hold them in place. Executes cut blocks on quick-hit passes and in-line runs. Is effective when pulling to lead perimeter runs or inside runs.

**Weaknesses:** On run blocks, he does not fire off the snap aggressively or block with good leverage, hindering his ability to get movement on straight-ahead runs. Does not always communicate well with teammates to neutralize line stunts.

**Bottom line:** Many view Dunbar as a guard/tackle 'tweener. He probably won't be drafted as high as he's rated here, but Dunbar will become a good starting right tackle who could shift to left tackle in time.

**12 ONIEL COUSINS**  
► UTEP

6-4 301 5.04

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness and agility to block well in the open field. Is muscular, showing the strength to turn and seal defensive linemen on in-line run blocks. When aggressive, he knocks defensive linemen off their feet.

**Weaknesses:** Is a much better athlete than a football player. Lacks good instincts and is often late to read and react to line stunts and delayed blitzes. Does not fire off the snap aggressively on run blocks.

**Bottom line:** Cousins has first-round-caliber athleticism and strength, but teams should be careful because offensive linemen with bad technique and questionable instincts often struggle to become productive in the pros. He has the tools to play tackle, guard or center but must show marked improvement in the mental side of the game.

**13 COREY CLARK**  
► TEXAS A&M

6-5 309 5.16

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Slides outside quickly to cut off speed rushers. Blocks with good leverage, changing directions to mirror pass-rush moves. Gets his hands on defensive ends quickly, and neutralizes them if he doesn't get overpowered first.

**Weaknesses:** Is not aggressive. Does not fire off the snap as a run blocker. Shows inconsistent footwork in the open field. Has thin arms and struggles to play strong.

**Bottom line:** Clark likely will be drafted lower than rated here (if at all), because he is not physically dominant. However, he has the tools to develop into a solid NFL starter at right tackle if he learns to use his hand punch and can improve his strength.

## 5TH ROUND

**14 ANTHONY COLLINS\***  
► KANSAS

6-5 315 5.25

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete. When focused, he shows the quickness to reach the corner to cut off speed rushers. Shows the strength to drive defensive linemen down the line on side blocks.

**Weaknesses:** Does not play up to his talent. Rarely shows passion for the game and gets beaten too often by lesser players. Shows poor footwork in pass protection. Quits on pass blocks too soon.

**Bottom line:** Collins has the talent to be an NFL starter, but teams should be wary. Offensive tackles who don't play with passion usually disappoint.

## 15 AKIM MILLINGTON

> ILLINOIS

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$  308 5.20

**FINAL GRADE 5.0**

**Strengths:** Moves his feet well, maximizing great size. Is good in pass protection, getting set quickly and showing patience. Widens out the pocket and keeps his head on a swivel to locate defenders.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent, playing without fire and showing concentration lapses. Must improve as a run blocker and stay low. Gets knocked backward when losing leverage. Lacks elite athleticism.

**Bottom line:** Millington has the massive size line coaches covet and the ability to make it in the NFL. His work ethic and consistency must improve, however. After a year as a backup, Millington should develop into a starter.

## 6TH ROUND

## 16 DIGGER BUJNOCH

> CINCINNATI

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$  280 5.30

**FINAL GRADE 4.5**

**Strengths:** In pass protection, he shows good quickness, flexibility and hand placement. Plays smart. Is a decent athlete. Has good speed. Moves well in the open field. Is adept at pulling outside and maintaining balance blocking in the open field.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks strength and explosion to sustain drive blocks. Doesn't dominate as an in-line blocker. Tends to get overaggressive and lunge at pass rushers.

**Bottom line:** Bujnoch is a good athlete with the quickness and flexibility NFL coaches desire. He must get stronger but is a player on the rise who could start at center, guard or tackle in the NFL.

## 17 CHESTER ADAMS

> GEORGIA

6-4 $\frac{1}{4}$  322 5.27

**FINAL GRADE 4.5**

**Strengths:** Is quick and athletic. Slides easily to cut off explosive speed rushers. When aggressive

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

**Chris Williams** > Vanderbilt

Considered a possible second-round pick by many prior to the Senior Bowl, his play that week in Mobile, Ala., assured that his name will be called in the first round.

### ON THE DECLINE

**Sam Baker** > USC

Baker was nagged throughout his senior season by a hamstring injury and really struggled at the Senior Bowl, which could result in him slipping all the way to the third round.

### SLEEPER

**Duane Brown** > Virginia Tech

Brown was not the most consistent tackle in college, but showed top-notch athleticism at the East-West Shrine Game.

### UNREALISTIC POTENTIAL

**King Dunlap** > Auburn

Once thought of as the top tackle prospect (along with Long), Dunlap's terrible senior season saw him benched for a freshman, which has NFL teams concerned if he will ever live up to his talent.

off the snap, he drives defenders down the line on side blocks. Flashes the strength to jolt and seal defensive linemen on run blocks.

**Weaknesses:** Is far too inconsistent in terms of technique and production. Struggles to adjust well in pass protection. Without great improvement, he will be dominated by NFL defensive linemen.

**Bottom line:** Adams drives coaches and NFL scouts crazy. He shows good natural athleticism and strength, but gets beat way too often by lesser foes. Adams is worth late-round consideration.

## 7TH ROUND

## 18 JOSH SITTON

> UCF

6-3 $\frac{1}{8}$  321 5.38

**FINAL GRADE 4.4**

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with sneaky footwork. Slides to the corner to cut off speedy edge rushers. Locks up defensive linemen on in-line run blocks, turning and sealing them off.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks long arms and ideal height for a tackle. Tends to block upright and straight-legged. Looks soft-bodied.

**Bottom line:** Sitton, who played offensive tackle in college, is a classic guard/tackle 'tweener. He may not get drafted but should stick in the NFL as a backup right tackle/guard.

## 19 BRIAN STAMPER

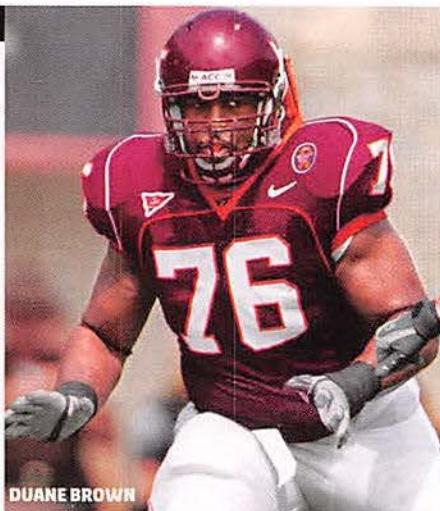
> VANDERBILT

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$  286 5.25

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Shows quick, nimble footwork. Is flexible and recovers well to negate defenders' secondary pass-rush moves. Ties up speed rushers. Moves well in the open field and does a decent job of reaching and blocking linebackers.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles against edge rushers. Gives up the inside to quick pass rushers underneath. Lacks the strength to hold his ground against bull rushers. Is raw, and lacks instincts. Is a durability concern after 2006 back surgery.



### BIGGEST RISK

**Oniel Cousins** > UTEP

Cousins is an elite athlete but raw football player. He is going to be drafted on pure athleticism and will go much higher than his on-field production warrants.

**Bottom line:** Stamper struggled in 2006 but was more consistent in '07. He is a good enough athlete to start at tackle in the NFL with improved consistency and technique and worth a late-round gamble.

## 20 STEPHEN SENE

> LIBERTY

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$  325 5.30

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Has good flexibility and quick feet. Fires off the snap and stays low as a run blocker. Adjusts to in-line movement and has the lower-body strength to dig defenders out of the hole. Rarely ends up on the ground. Plays with a decent base in pass protection and slides well laterally.

**Weaknesses:** Does not play well in the open field or pull well. Needs to improve upper-body strength. Does not have a strong punch.

**Bottom line:** Sene is older than most draft prospects; he bounced from South Carolina to Dodge City (Kan.) Community College before landing at Liberty. He will have a shot to stick in the NFL because of his versatility, but is a project and may need a year or two on the practice squad.

## 21 SHANNON BOATMAN

> FLORIDA STATE

6-5 $\frac{3}{4}$  315 5.11

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Is big and strong. Can control defensive linemen if he maintains good leverage and stays aggressive. Has the size and strength to drive defensive linemen down the line on side blocks.

**Weaknesses:** Is very inconsistent. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet after contact in pass protection. Must be more aggressive.

**Bottom line:** Boatman is a frustrating prospect to grade, and might be better at guard. He is worth a late-round gamble because of his physical gifts, but looks like an underachiever.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

## 22 BRENO GIACOMINI

> LOUISVILLE

6-7 $\frac{1}{2}$  305 5.20

**FINAL GRADE 3.9**

**Strengths:** Has excellent size and long arms. Can bend his knees to pass block with good leverage; if able to stop the initial charge, he usually eliminates his man. Is highly competitive and blocks to the whistle.

**Weaknesses:** Is a tackle/guard 'tweener. Lacks the quickness, agility and athleticism to handle pass rushers at tackle, and cannot change directions to slide back inside to stop explosive moves back underneath. Is not an aggressive, fire-off-the-ball run blocker. Struggles to bend his knees and run block with leverage; usually bends at his waist and overextends.

**Bottom line:** Giacomini is big and tough but lacks the athleticism to play tackle and the toughness and strength to play guard. Odds are he won't last long in the NFL.

## 23 KRIS KASparek

> AKRON

6-5 $\frac{3}{4}$  265 4.90

**FINAL GRADE 3.9**

**Strengths:** Has good size and decent strength. Understands how to block. Has strong hands and uses good form to maintain position. Works hard and plays smart. Takes good angles to defenders in the open field.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks experience at tackle; played tight end at Akron. Must learn to finish blocks with power. Does not always take advantage of size, falling off too many blocks.

**Bottom line:** Kasperek will not make it in the NFL at tight end, but has a chance at tackle. He'll be a project who could provide a nice payoff for a patient team in a couple of years.

## 24 GEOFF SCHWARTZ

> OREGON

6-6 1/2 332 5.45

FINAL GRADE 3.8

**Strengths:** Is massive; swallows up defenders once locked on and takes up a lot of space. Sustains blocks.

**Weaknesses:** Has trouble moving with explosiveness. Is a catch blocker; loses leverage at the point of contact and gets pushed back. Gives up too much ground before getting set in pass protection.

**Bottom line:** For all Schwartz's size and experience, he lacks the athleticism to be a productive NFL player. Schwartz will get an opportunity as a free agent, but is a long shot to stick on a roster.

## 25 EDWIN PINIGIS

> LIBERTY

6-6 1/2 303 5.28

FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Is massive with good playing strength. Plays smart and uses angles well. Is better on straight-line blocks. Gets good leg drive.

**Weaknesses:** Is stiff and struggles to move laterally. Lacks the athletic ability to move in the open field and adjust to make blocks outside his frame. Overextends against speed rushers.

**Bottom line:** Pinigis started a handful of games at Virginia before transferring to Liberty in 2005. His lack of flexibility will make it hard to make it in the NFL, but he should get a shot because of his size.

## 26 PETER GRANIENNO

> ARIZONA

6-6 1/2 306 5.35

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Has ideal height and long arms. Gets out of his stance and into blocking position quickly on run blocks and pass blocks. Shows the strength to lock up defensive ends.

**Weaknesses:** Is a stiff and limited athlete, hindering his ability to block effectively. Doesn't use his hands well in pass protection.

**Bottom line:** Graniello has long arms and good height, but lacks the athleticism to play tackle and the strength to move inside to guard. He will have a tough time sticking in the NFL, even as a backup.

## 27 CARLTON MEDDER

> FLORIDA

6-5 310 5.55

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Has long arms and plays with good strength. Shows a nasty hand punch, stunning defenders.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Lacks the flexibility and quickness to handle speed rushers. Is late off the snap.

**Bottom line:** Medder is horrible operating in the open field and really struggles in pass protection. He will struggle to stick on an NFL roster.

## IN PROFILE

### RYAN CLADY

BOISE STATE

**W**hen Ryan Clady signed with Boise State in 2004, the NFL Draft hardly crossed his mind. He had started his football career just three years earlier, stepping onto the field as a high school sophomore for the first time since age 10. Big-time college recruiters never noticed the still-developing prospect, though he displayed the build and athleticism to make one wonder why he'd taken so long to find the gridiron.

"That was kind of on the backburner," Clady, now 6-6 and 319 pounds, says of the NFL. "At the time I wasn't really a [top] high-school recruit—obviously, going to Boise State—and the thing I was thinking about going up there was just trying to get on the field, just trying to play."

Recent history gave Boise State players little reason to expect a serious shot at the pros. Just six Broncos were drafted from 1994-2004, none higher than No. 141 overall. The program's most successful alumni from that period is defensive tackle Kimo von Oelhoffen, who was taken in the sixth round in 1994 by the Cincinnati Bengals and played for the Eagles last season. Boise State's repeated conference dominance—it went undefeated in the Western Athletic Conference in 2002 and '03—did little to attract the attention of NFL clubs.

The Broncos put together a flawless regular season in 2004 (when Clady redshirted as a true freshman), only to close with an agonizing 44-40 defeat at the hands of Louisville in the Liberty Bowl.

"It leaves a bad taste in your mouth," Clady says of standing helpless on the sideline while his team fell just short of perfection.

As it turned out, he would see the field sooner than expected. Clady started 11 of 13 games at right tackle in 2005, when Boise State finished ninth in the nation in scoring (36.08 points per game) and fifth in rushing touchdowns (36). He moved to left tackle the following season and earned a number of accolades, as the Broncos improved to second in the nation in points (39.69) and rushing scores (39) on their way to another undefeated regular season.

This time, Boise State was awarded a BCS berth in the Fiesta Bowl against the No. 10 Oklahoma Sooners—and with it a chance to



finally earn some real recognition. One famous Statue of Liberty play-call and a stunning 43-42 overtime victory later, the Broncos turned a page in their history in more ways than a school-record No. 5 finish in the final Associated Press poll.

"Three or four dudes that probably wouldn't even have gotten invited to the [NFL] combine got invited just because of that game," Clady says. "That was a big factor in maybe even a couple of them being drafted."

Four Broncos were selected in last year's draft, including free safety Gerald Alexander, a second-round pick by the Lions.

On that fateful two-point conversion that won the game for the Broncos, Clady pulled around the tight end to seal off the left side, allowing running back Ian Johnson to cruise into the end zone unscathed.

"At the end of the day, the quarterback and running back are going to get all the glamour," Clady says. "You just gotta do what you gotta do to get them into that spotlight."

Now Clady prepares to enter the spotlight himself. As Boise State's first-ever early entry into the NFL Draft, he is also slated to become its inaugural first-round selection, which promises the program a newfound level of exposure and legitimacy.

"It helps, man," Clady says. "Being in the spotlight helps."

—Mike Giglio

# GUARDS

Unlike the 2007 draft, there are no guards expected to be first-round picks this year. However, there's much more high quality depth at the position, with as many as nine guards possibly getting selected in the first four rounds. Most of the better prospects in this year's draft are rated as third- to fourth-round picks, as each have a few question marks. But there's little doubt that two seasons from now at least six players from this group will become quality starters in the NFL.

As is often the case, some players in this group played offensive tackle in college but project as having a better chance of success playing guard in the NFL, led by Toledo's John Greco.

Greco is the type of offensive lineman every team wants because he plays with the passion and intensity that is too often very hard to find. Greco is also a very good athlete for a guard and will be valuable because of his ability and effectiveness in pulling and blocking in space. The primary reason he's viewed as a guard prospect is his short arms.

Beyond Greco, there are a number of quality prospects who could end up being chosen as soon as the third round, including the Rutgers duo of Pedro Sosa and Jeremy Zuttah, who both played offensive tackle in college, as did Nebraska's Carl Nicks. While Sosa and Zuttah are moving from tackle due to a lack of height, Nicks is best suited at guard because he's too heavy to be an effective NFL tackle.

Utah State's Shawn Murphy (the son of former Atlanta Braves star Dale Murphy), USC's Chilo Rachal and Virginia's Branden Albert are the best among the true guards.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-4	330	5.00
NFL Minimum	6-1	285	5.45

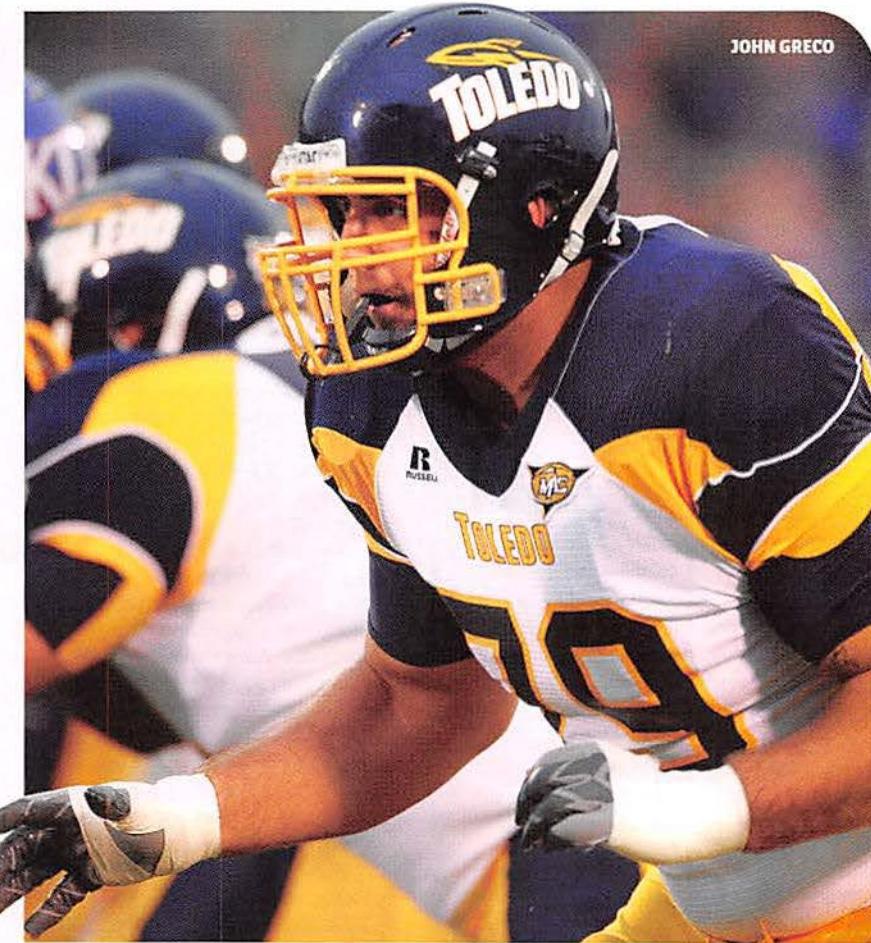
Although guards must still have the athletic ability to reach linebackers in the running game and handle quicker defensive tackles in the passing game, teams don't pull their guards as often as they once did. Most defenses use a 4-3 alignment with massive, run-stuffing tackles in the middle. As a result, offenses need guards with the size and strength to match up against those huge defensive tackles.

## 2007 DRAFT

### OFFENSIVE GUARDS TAKEN: 13

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	1	2	1	4	2	1	2

**These prospects require patience, but teams will be rewarded in time**



JOHN GRECO

## 2ND ROUND

### 1 JOHN GRECO TOLEDO

6-4 3/4 302 5.20

FINAL GRADE 7.5

**NFL comparison:** Logan Mankins, Patriots**Run blocking:** Is a consistently productive run blocker, but not physically dominant. Lead blocks effectively on outside runs, adjusting well to moving targets. **Grade: 6.5****Pass blocking:** Shows quick footwork getting out of his stance. Communicates well with teammates to neutralize line stunts. Shows good awareness to pick up delayed blitzes. **Grade: 7.9****Initial quickness:** Has experience playing tackle, where he could get out of his stance and slide outside in time to protect the corner against explosive speed rushers. Will set up quickly enough to block explosive defensive tackles. **Grade: 7.9**

**Strength:** Uses his heavy hands to play strong at the point of attack in pass protection, but must adjust to pass blocking against much bigger defensive tackles after primarily blocking defensive ends as an offensive tackle. Has the strength to drive defensive linemen down the line on angle blocks, but will have trouble strength-wise against some big NFL defensive tackles. **Grade: 7.0**

**Mobility:** Can chip defensive tackles and reach the second level quickly, then adjust to block the linebacker in the open field. Gets outside quickly on quick-hitting screen passes to the receiver, and can pull and lead on outside runs. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Greco is an attention-grabber with his fierce competitiveness and athletic ability. His short arms make him better suited as a guard in the pros, but he also has enough athleticism to play right tackle. Greco should become a productive NFL starter.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How GUARDS are graded:** **Initial quickness:** Comes off the ball, beats defensive linemen. **Run blocking:** Leverage, control, balance. **Pass blocking:** Feet, setup, mirrors, adjusts in space. **Pulls and traps:** Hits moving targets, adjusts in space. **Use of hands:** Gets separation, keeps defensive linemen off, leverage. **Strength:** Leverage, moves the pile, can anchor. **Explosion:** Finishes block, plays low, has pop.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

**3RD ROUND****2** SHAWN MURPHY  
► UTAH STATE

6-4 1/8 319 5.20

FINAL GRADE **6.5****NFL comparison:** Chris Snee, Giants**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive. Maintains good balance and plays under control after making contact in the open field. Locks up linemen and turns them out of the play. Is smart and alert in pass protection, switching off to negate line stunts and delayed blitzes.**Weaknesses:** Lacks experience at guard, showing inconsistent technique. Does not fire off the snap on run blocks, hindering his ability to get movement on straight-ahead blocks.**Bottom line:** Murphy has all the tools to be a solid NFL starter, but will need time. He still is learning the guard position after switching from the defensive line before his junior season at Utah State. It is rare to see a player with such limited experience at guard display such good instincts and awareness. Murphy won't be the first guard drafted, but in time he'll prove to be the best of the 2008 class.**3** BRANDEN ALBERT\*  
► VIRGINIA

6-7 310 5.10

FINAL GRADE **6.5****NFL comparison:** Chester Pitts, Texans**Strengths:** Is massive. Physically dominates opponents with great natural strength. Has some experience at left tackle, and shows the footwork and athleticism to play there in the NFL.**Weaknesses:** Is not a fiery competitor. Does not fire off the snap against the run; is more of a stand, grab and catch blocker who struggles to get movement on in-line blocks. Is an upright pass blocker who will get destroyed by defensive tackles in the NFL if he does not play with a better base.**Bottom line:** Albert has first-round talent but hasn't produced at that level. Although he's huge, his soft-bodied physique and inconsistent technique pose concerns about his commitment to the game. If he competes harder, Albert should become a solid NFL guard and perhaps an offensive tackle.**4** CHILO RACHAL\*  
► USC

6-5 315 5.10

FINAL GRADE **6.0****NFL comparison:** Jahri Evans, Saints**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quick footwork and agility to adjust in pass protection. Shows the strength to control defensive linemen, and flashes the ability to push them off their feet. Is aware in pass protection, and switches off well with teammates against line stunts and blitzes.**Weaknesses:** Struggles to play with good leverage, minimizing his strength. Does not fire off the snap on run blocks, and struggles to get movement on straight-ahead blocks.**Bottom line:** Rachal could have improved his stock with a solid senior season, but reportedly declared for the draft because of financial hardships. With a season or two to develop, he should become a productive NFL starter in nearly any type of offense.**5** CARL NICKS  
► NEBRASKA

6-4 1/8 343 5.45

FINAL GRADE **6.0****NFL comparison:** Deuce Lutui, Cardinals**Strengths:** Is big, aggressive and physically**Strengths:** Dominates defenders once he gets his hands on them. Shows the quickness to slide to the corner and cut off speed rushers.**Weaknesses:** Is raw and needs a lot of work on technique and footwork. Lacks instincts in pass protection. Is late reacting to delayed blitzes and line stunts. Does not compete hard on every play.**Bottom line:** It's difficult to predict Nicks' NFL future. He switched from defensive tackle to offensive tackle four years ago. Although Nicks has the athleticism to play tackle in the NFL, he looks more like a guard and must be brought along slowly.**4TH ROUND****6** ANDREW CRUMMEY  
► MARYLAND

6-4 1/4 300 5.44

FINAL GRADE **5.9****Strengths:** Plays with a mean streak. Shows quick footwork off the snap, and gets through the line fast when uncovered. Slides and shuffles well in tight spaces in pass protection. Is smart and shows good instincts in pass protection; works well with teammates to neutralize line stunts and blitzes.**Weaknesses:** Is a stiff and limited athlete, hindering his ability to block moving targets in the open field. Struggles in pass protection when forced to move around a lot. Has a bad habit of getting overaggressive on in-line run blocks.**Bottom line:** Crummey is the type of lineman people write off because he has questionable athleticism. However, his consistency and production become more impressive with further film evaluation. Crummey could slip on some draft boards, and may even get cut a few times before maturing into his true projection.**7** MIKE McGLYNN  
► PITTSBURGH

6-4 1/8 309 5.20

FINAL GRADE **5.9****Strengths:** Is aggressive. Gets out of his stance and sets up quickly in pass protection. Shows good awareness and instincts to pick up delayed blitzes and line stunts. Is adept at driving defensive linemen down the line. Shows good speed to pull and lead perimeter runs. Is a good long snapper.**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete who lacks the flexibility and agility to block well in the open field. Struggles to block with consistent leverage. Has a soft body and a bit of a gut.**Bottom line:** McGlynn is a 'tweener prospect—his height, arm length and athleticism are a better fit at guard, but he has the quickness, smarts, instincts and competitiveness to play tackle. McGlynn is best suited at guard in the NFL but will likely be tried at tackle first.**8** ERIC YOUNG  
► TENNESSEE

6-4 320 5.30

FINAL GRADE **5.6****Strengths:** Has a solid build. When playing with good technique and aggressiveness, physically dominates as a blocker. Shows the flexibility to pass block with leverage, and displays good strength when using his hands aggressively.**Weaknesses:** Does not consistently play to his talent level, and allows opponents to make too many plays. Does not always work to the whistle. Must improve at maintaining his balance and keeping after blocks.**Bottom line:** Young is a disappointing prospect who is tough to evaluate. He was a tackle in college, but isn't athletic enough to play there in the NFL. To be productive at guard, Young must unlearn some of the bad habits he has developed.**9** HEATH BENEDICT  
► NEWBERRY

6-4 1/4 321 5.28

FINAL GRADE **5.5****Strengths:** Is massive; looks like he was chiseled out of stone. Has excellent natural strength and dominates when aggressive. Ties up defenders one-on-one on straight-ahead run blocks long enough for the ballcarrier to get through the hole.**Weaknesses:** His inability to stay eligible early in his career at Tennessee is a red flag. Lack of agility necessitates the switch from tackle to guard. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet upon contact, losing his block. Had an injury-riddled senior season.**Bottom line:** Benedict dominated Division II foes as a junior, but was hampered by injuries last year and did not play with the same sense of urgency. Although he has the talent to be a starting NFL guard, one has to wonder if he'll ever approach the player he was in 2006.**5TH ROUND****10** JEREMY ZUTTAH  
► RUTGERS

6-3 1/8 299 5.45

FINAL GRADE **5.4****Strengths:** Is strong and competitive. Shows the quickness to get out of his stance and cut off speed rushers. Displays good instincts to neutralize line stunts and delayed blitzes.**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete lacking ideal agility. Struggles to change directions and slide back inside to neutralize secondary pass-rush moves. Must improve footwork in pass protection.**Bottom line:** NFL coaches and scouts downgrade offensive linemen lacking in athleticism, but Zutah shouldn't drop too far because he has what it takes to be a solid NFL starter at guard. He should be a good Day 2 value.**11** DAVID HALE  
► WEBER STATE

6-5 1/8 309 5.25

FINAL GRADE **5.4****Strengths:** Gets after defensive linemen quickly and aggressively, helping him to open holes and eliminate targets. Pulls and blocks linebackers well in the open field. Also has experience at offensive tackle.**Weaknesses:** Must switch from offensive tackle to guard in the NFL and learn to deal with big defensive tackles who get on top of him faster than defensive ends did. Gets too aggressive at times, bending at the waist and reaching on in-line blocks.**Bottom line:** Linemen like Hale are usually graded incorrectly; either he'll be overvalued due to his excellent intangibles or undervalued because he's not a premier athlete. He will need time to adjust to guard and must block with better leverage, but should become a starter.**12** CHRIS McDUFFIE  
► CLEMSON

6-4 322 5.25

FINAL GRADE **5.4****Strengths:** Is big, with the strength to lock up defenders. Sets up quickly in pass protection, flashing the ability to get his hands on defensive tackles

and pin them. Is aware in pass protection, picking up delayed blitzers with ease.

**Weaknesses:** Is somewhat soft-bodied. Lacks the speed to pull and lead perimeter runs. Does not consistently pass block with good leverage, hindering his ability to slide and adjust to quick pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** McDuffie is the type of guard who gets overlooked because he appears to be out of shape. However, he could become a solid starter for a power-blocking team if he improves his technique, fitness and footwork.

## 13 ROY SCHUENING

> OREGON STATE

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$  308 5.25

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is smart and finds a way to block his man. Seals defensive tackles out of the play.

**Weaknesses:** Is just adequate athletically, lacking ideal quickness and speed. Can be overaggressive blocking in the open field, falling off his man.

**Bottom line:** Schuening shouldn't be overlooked because of his lack of athleticism. He is a big, strong guard who can lock up and eliminate his man on in-line run blocks and in pass protection.

## 14 ROBERT FELTON

> ARKANSAS

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$  313 5.40

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is big and athletic with the strength to stand up power rushers. Locks up defensive tackles when pass blocking in a small area. Got into better shape as a senior and played his best.

**Weaknesses:** Gets lazy with his footwork and technique too often and plays like a bad athlete. When playing with poor leverage, he struggles to adjust to moving targets in the open field.

**Bottom line:** Felton will likely be drafted higher than he deserves because of his athleticism and size, but won't last long in the NFL if he doesn't get into better shape and improve his technique.

## 15 PEDRO SOSA

> RUTGERS

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$  299 5.15

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness to get out of his stance and be set to block. Bends his knees nicely to block with good leverage, maintaining good balance to combat quick pass-rush moves. Slides outside well to cut off speed rushers and ride them around the corner.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height and has short arms. Must learn to use hand punch to keep pass rushers out of his chest; gets jolted backward too often. Does not fire off the snap aggressively on straight-ahead run blocks or drive defensive linemen off the line of scrimmage.

**Bottom line:** Sosa is a frustrating prospect. He has the athletic ability to play tackle, but will struggle mightily there in the NFL due to his lack of height and arm length. Until proven otherwise, his best shot in the NFL is at guard.

## 16 MIKE GIBSON

> CALIFORNIA

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$  302 5.20

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete. Shows the quickness, flexibility and agility to pass block well. Has the speed to pull and lead perimeter runs, and adjusts well to moving targets.

**Weaknesses:** Has short arms, hindering his ability

to get his hands on defensive ends with good technique and consistency. Does not fire off the snap aggressively on run blocks, limiting his ability to get movement. Will not be able to dominate defenders on short-yardage runs.

**Bottom line:** Gibson was a productive tackle in college. With his solid pass-blocking technique and experience in the pass-happy Pac-10, he could get a shot at right tackle in the NFL. However, his lack of ideal height and arm length make him a candidate to move inside. Gibson should become a solid starter after getting a season or two to develop.

## 17 DAN GORE

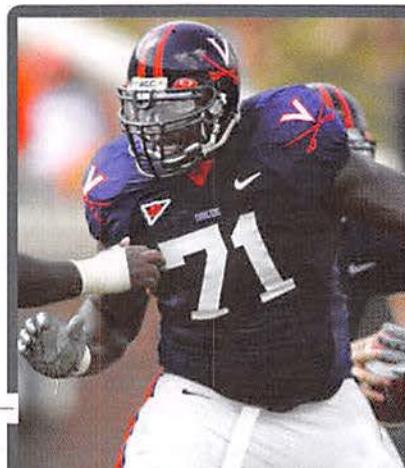
> BOISE STATE

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$  288 5.25

FINAL GRADE 5.3

**Strengths:** Gets after defenders quickly and maintains block to the whistle. Pins defensive linemen on seal blocks to open holes for ballcarriers. Slides and shuffles well to adjust to line stunts and blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Must adjust to moving inside after



### SKILL SET

#### BEST PASS BLOCKER

Branden Albert > Virginia

While not a fiery competitor, Albert has great size and long arms that help him lock up defensive linemen and keep them from getting any real pressure on the quarterback.

#### BEST RUN BLOCKER

Shawn Murphy > Utah State

Murphy is a strong and physical in-line run blocker, but really separates himself from the other prospects with his excellent ability to pull and block out in space.

#### MOST ATHLETIC

John Greco > Toledo

Greco is a good enough athlete to play both offensive tackle and guard, and also has great footwork, agility, flexibility and pulling speed.

#### WEIGHT ROOM STRENGTH

Heath Benedict > Newberry

Benedict is a machine who looks the part in uniform and shows much of his workout results on the playing field.

#### MOST VERSATILE

Carl Nicks > Nebraska

While Nicks does not produce up to his ability consistently, he has the athleticism to play any offensive line position—with the right amount of dedication.

playing offensive tackle in college; lacks the quickness to slide out to the corner and cut off speed rushers as a tackle. Does not fire off the snap as a run blocker and struggles to get movement.

**Bottom line:** Gore is best suited to play guard in the pros because of his lack of athletic ability, but he must pass block with better leverage and his hand punch more aggressively to handle NFL defensive tackles. Once he adjusts to his new position, Gore should develop into a quality starter.

## 18 DREW RADOVICH

> USC

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$  302 5.25

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive. Shows the smarts and instincts to consistently block to his ability. Works well with teammates to read and pick up blitzes and line stunts. Is especially adept at picking up delayed blitzes. Seals defensive linemen with ease.

**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete. Shows stiff movements in his hips and ankles, hindering his ability to change directions to negate secondary pass-rush moves. Lacks the power to drive defensive linemen on straight-ahead run blocks.

**Bottom line:** Radovich is impressive because of his all-out hustle, which could trick teams into overlooking his lack of athletic ability. He has all the intangibles to at least become a top-notch backup.

## 7TH ROUND

## 19 BARRY RICHARDSON

> CLEMSON

6-6 $\frac{1}{2}$  331 5.45

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Shows good natural athleticism and the quick footwork to slide out to the corner and cut off most edge rushers. Flashes the ability to read the delayed blitz.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks aggressiveness and consistency. Tends to keep his hands low in pass protection. Shows sloppy footwork in pass protection; tends to reach to make contact rather than sliding his feet.

**Bottom line:** Richardson is not close to being the player some think he is. A guard/tackle 'tweener, he has glaring weaknesses at both spots. Richardson is worth a late-round look because of his size, athletic ability and potential. Teams may give him a shot at offensive tackle in the NFL, but ultimately he'll wind up being a backup guard.

## 20 ADAM KRAUS

> MICHIGAN

6-5 $\frac{1}{2}$  295 5.35

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Shows good smarts and awareness in pass protection, and effectively hands his man off to teammates so he can pick up the delayed blitz.

**Weaknesses:** Is a stiff, limited athlete. Struggles to run block with leverage; often bends at the waist and overextends, missing blocks.

**Bottom line:** Kraus is an overachiever who lacks the tools to be an NFL starter. He might go undrafted, but his toughness, smarts and instincts should make him a valuable backup guard/center, having played both positions at Michigan.

## 21 DEVIN CLARK

> NEW MEXICO

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$  310 5.28

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is at his best in pass protection. Shows good footwork, allowing him to maintain balance.

Moves well laterally to pick up defenders, and stays after his blocks.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit short and light for a tackle. Struggles mightily as a run blocker; leans too much and loses balance. Is not explosive off the snap. **Bottom line:** Clark must move to guard and improve significantly as a run blocker (in addition to getting bigger and stronger) to make an NFL roster. He might need a few years, but should eventually become a quality backup with the potential to turn into a starter.

## 22 JOSH COFFMAN

> EAST CAROLINA

6-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 290, 5.05

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Has good size, speed and athletic ability. Shows good strength and punch in pass protection. When getting his hands inside defenders off the snap, wins battles with brute power. Shows good flexibility to bend and gain leverage.

**Weaknesses:** Is still learning to play on the line after converting from a tight end. Has major technique flaws. Gets lazy with his footwork.

**Bottom line:** Coffman has the tools to play in the NFL, but must switch from tackle and needs time to develop. He will likely spend a season on the practice squad.

## 23 EDWIN HARRISON

> COLORADO

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 302, 5.49

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Shows the speed to pull and lead block on outside runs. Drives defensive linemen down on side blocks to open holes inside. Works well with teammates to neutralize line stunts and blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent; frequently fails to block to his ability. Lacks the bulk and strength to hold his ground against power rushers.

**Bottom line:** Harrison has the athletic ability to play in the NFL, but was an underachiever in college. He is a former starter at right tackle, which gives him added value.

## 24 RYAN WENDELL

> FRESNO STATE

6-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 287, 5.15

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Shows good technique in pass protection and understands how to gain good leverage as a run blocker. Does not make mental errors, shows good leadership skills, is versatile and can play guard or center. Works to the whistle.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height and must add weight to battle bigger NFL athletes. Had trouble against bull rushers in college.

**Bottom line:** Wendell is a good all-around lineman who can help a team at guard or center. His NFL coaches must be patient because it will take time for him to add the necessary bulk to compete. He could develop into a starter down the road, though.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

## 25 CHARLES MANU

> NEVADA

6-2 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 304, 5.10

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is powerful. Fires off the snap quickly and is aggressive out of his stance. Shocks defenders with a powerful punch. Is tough and plays through injuries.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks foot quickness and falls off blocks. Is not good in the open field. Gets beat by faster pass rushers.

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

#### Shawn Murphy > Utah State

Murphy didn't play on the offensive line until his junior season, but had a very good senior year and is climbing up many draft boards.

### ON THE DECLINE

#### Barry Richardson > Clemson

Richardson was viewed as an All-America prospect entering last season, but struggled mightily and has tumbled down draft rankings.

### SLEEPER

#### David Hale > Weber State

Hale plays with a passion and aggressiveness that is tough to find. Combined with his athletic ability, those things give him the tools to become a starter down the road.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

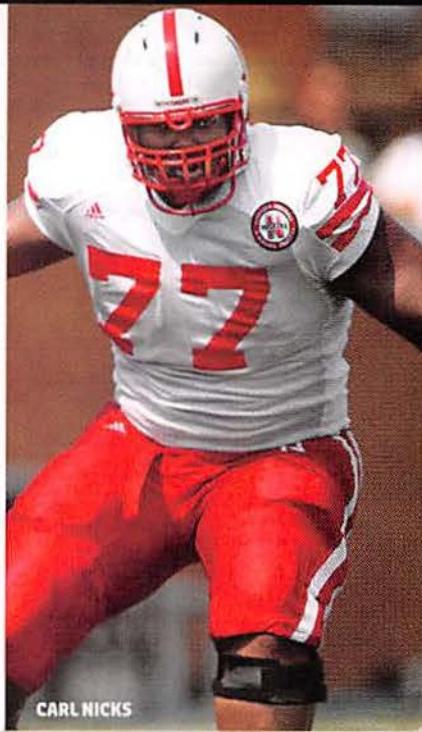
#### Carl Nicks > Nebraska

Nicks has the combination of size and athleticism to make him a first-round possibility, but he doesn't consistently compete hard.

### BIGGEST RISK

#### Heath Benedict > Newberry

Benedict is a dominant blocker who struggles with consistency and played in Division II, which causes concern.



CARL NICKS

**Bottom line:** Manu, who was an offensive tackle in college, must switch to guard to play in the NFL. He has a legitimate chance to stick as a backup.

## 26 SHANNON TEVAGA

> UCLA

6-3, 316, 5.15

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Makes good side blocks on inside runs. Pulls outside and makes good lead blocks when defenders are in his path. Is aware in pass protection, working with teammates to neutralize line stunts and blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Is a stiff and limited athlete. Cannot adjust to moving targets in the open field, often whiffing. Does not move well through traffic.

**Bottom line:** Tevaga, who nearly declared for the 2007 draft, didn't improve much during his senior season. He could become a quality backup for an NFL team that uses a zone-blocking scheme.

## 27 KIRK BARTON

> OHIO STATE

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 303, 5.40

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is big and strong, with a frame to add weight. Plays smart and doesn't make mistakes. Shows great technique in pass protection. Uses his hands well to keep defenders off his body.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks athleticism. Struggles to change directions to negate line stunts and blitzes. Must improve sluggish footwork. Plays stiff and is not a good open-field blocker.

**Bottom line:** Barton's production will not translate to the NFL, where his poor athleticism and footwork will be exposed. He still holds some allure as a free-agent pickup because of his intelligence, but will need time to develop on a practice squad.

## 28 KERRY BROWN

> APPALACHIAN STATE

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 301, 5.30

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows good strength at the point of

contact. Excels as a pass blocker. Maintains good leverage throughout the play. Works well with teammates to neutralize line stunts and blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks quickness off the snap; is always a step late. Must improve run-blocking technique. Looks stiff when trapping and pulling. Lacks a mean streak.

**Bottom line:** Brown has many NFL qualities and would fit best on a team that emphasizes the passing game. He will get a chance as a backup if able to correct footwork issues.

## 29 MIKE FLADELL

> RUTGERS

6-6 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 325, 5.45

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is competitive and never stops working. Fires off the snap aggressively on in-line run blocks. Sets up quickly in pass protection. Works well with teammates to neutralize delayed blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete who struggles to move laterally in pass protection. Lacks the speed to pull and lead perimeter runs, and struggles to block moving targets in the open field.

**Bottom line:** Fladell, a defensive lineman in high school, is a work in progress. He doesn't figure to improve much due to his limited athleticism, but should be able to challenge for a backup spot.

## 30 MARSHAL AUSBERRY

> LIBERTY

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$ , 331, 5.65

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has good balance and strength. Is mature and plays smart. Shows good awareness against line stunts and blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks foot quickness and speed. Gets top-heavy when chasing or blocking on the move. Needs to drop some weight.

**Bottom line:** Ausberry, a transfer from Virginia, started one season at Liberty. His size and strength will likely earn a training camp invite, but he must go to a team that can develop him further.

C+

# CENTERS

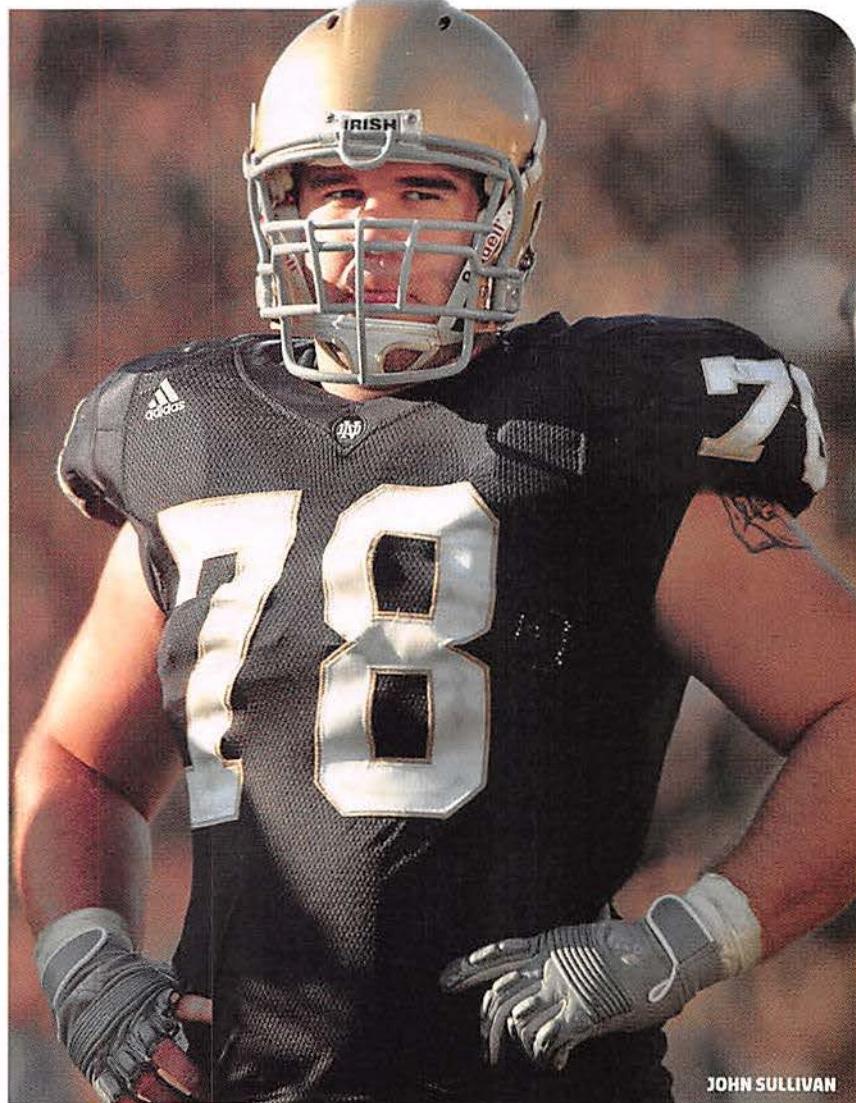
While there are some good second-day prospects in this group, it's likely no center will be chosen in the first or second round this year. Most of the top centers have good athletic ability but are undersized and will need to bulk up to become as productive in the NFL as they were in college.

Notre Dame's John Sullivan has not received a ton of national attention, but is a good prospect with many of the tools NFL teams look for in a center. He is a smart player with good leadership skills whose effort and competitiveness enable him to consistently keep his man from disrupting a play. While Sullivan may be the top center, there are a number of players nipping at his heels.

Bowling Green's Kory Lichtensteiger and Arizona State's Mike Pollak are two who haven't gotten the recognition of others, but they definitely caught the eyes of NFL scouts last season. At the Senior Bowl, they both showed real potential to become quality starting centers. There are a number of other prospects from big schools who have a chance to develop into starters, including Texas A&M's Cody Wallace, Oregon State's Kyle DeVan and Wake Forest's Steve Justice.

One small-school prospect who has jumped onto the scene is Illinois State's Isaiah Wiggins. He's an athletic center who was very productive at a much lower level of competition, but at just 275 pounds, he'll clearly have to add weight to improve his strength.

**Size matters in this year's class, which has a number of players flying under the radar**



JOHN SULLIVAN

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-4	310	4.90
NFL Minimum	6-1	285	5.30

Centers need the size and strength to handle bull rushers and open running lanes against a nose tackle in a 3-4 or a defensive tackle in a 4-3. Often centers are not covered by a defensive lineman in a 4-3, so they must be able to play in space. This requires the quickness to hit a moving linebacker without overextending in the running game and the ability to move laterally to help the guards in pass protection and blitz pickups.

## 2007 DRAFT

CENTERS TAKEN: 6

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	0	2	0	1	1	2	0

## 4TH ROUND

### 1 JOHN SULLIVAN ► NOTRE DAME

6-3 1/2 294 5.30 FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a smart center who consistently maximizes his potential. Has a thick lower body. Gets his hands on defensive linemen quickly and shows the strength to lock them up. Makes positional blocks on in-line run blocks, pinning his man to the side. Reaches the second level with surprising quickness. When keeping his knees bent and maintaining good balance, can stop linebackers.

Is big, strong and competitive enough to hold his ground against bull rushers. Communicates well with teammates to neutralize line stunts and delayed blitzes. Shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the speed to pull and lead on perimeter runs. Too often bends at the waist and leans on the defender and ultimately falls off the block. Has poor leverage. Struggles to shuffle and slide to cover a lot of ground.

**Bottom line:** Sullivan has the tools to become a quality NFL starter, but must play with good technique more consistently. He might need a season or two to adjust to the pros.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How CENTERS are graded:** Initial quickness: Comes off the ball, beats defensive linemen. Run blocking: Leverage, control, balance. Pass blocking: Feet, setup, mirrors, adjusts in space. Pulls and traps: Hits moving targets, adjusts in space. Use of hands: Gets separation, keeps defensive linemen off, leverage. Strength: Leverage, moves the pile, can anchor. Explosion: Finishes block, plays low, has pop.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

**5TH ROUND****2 KORY LICHTENSTEIGER**  
► BOWLING GREEN

6-2 3/8 296 5.10 □ FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive. Gets out of his stance quickly. Makes reach blocks on shaded defensive linemen. Delivers a quick blow on side blocks. When playing with his knees bent, blocks with good leverage. Shows the quickness to pull and block linebackers in the hole. Has the strength to hold his ground against bull rushers when playing with good leverage and getting his hands on defensive linemen fast. Slides and adjusts well in pass protection, working with teammates to negate line stunts.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks natural size and explosive power. Is not a fire-off-the-ball run blocker who can drive his man backward. Does not consistently use his hands aggressively in pass protection, allowing defensive tackles to get into his chest and jolt him backward. Has a bad habit of stopping his feet upon contact, falling off too many blocks. Struggles to block moving targets in the open field.

**Bottom line:** Lichtensteiger is the type of center who often gets overlooked because he lacks great size and athleticism, but he definitely helped himself at the Senior Bowl. While he'll likely be a low draft pick, Lichtensteiger should become a solid NFL starter.

**3 MIKE POLLAK**  
► ARIZONA STATE

6-3 1/8 299 5.07 □ FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Is athletic and gets out of his stance and into good blocking position quickly. Shows the flexibility to pass block with good leverage against straight-line pass rushers. Flashes the ability to use his hands to lock up defenders and play stronger than his measured size would indicate. Shows good awareness in pass protection to pick up delayed blitzes. Communicates well with others to neutralize line stunts. Can pull and block a containment linebacker to open up off-tackle runs. When uncovered, can reach linebackers on the second level.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the size and strength to hold his ground against explosive, power rushers; gets driven back into the backfield too often. Struggles to stop pass rushers in their tracks. Does not fire off the ball as a run blocker. Struggles to move through traffic to reach his man in time.

**Bottom line:** Pollak shows good intangibles and athletic ability, but isn't strong or aggressive enough right now to block NFL defensive tackles. However, he made a good impression at the Senior Bowl. If he's able to add bulk, Pollak will develop into an NFL starter in a season or two.

**4 CODY WALLACE**  
► TEXAS A&M

6-4 1/8 290 5.36 □ FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Plays with energy, competitiveness and toughness. Is athletic and blocks well in the open field. When keeping his knees bent and maintaining good balance, he can consistently lock up and eliminate linebackers. Gets out of his stance and set quickly to pass block. Is a good positional run blocker. Blocks with good leverage, consistently sealing his man out of the play. Shows good



CODY WALLACE

to pick up delayed blitzes and line stunts. Drives defensive linemen down the line on side blocks and ties up nose tackles nicely. Is surprisingly effective pulling and leading on perimeter runs with a defender in his path.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete who lacks the quickness, agility and speed to adjust and block moving targets in the open field. Struggles to slide to the outside in pass protection. Lacks the quickness to get off the snap and block defensive tackles. Is short and stocky and has shorter arms, a hindrance against aggressive pass rushers.

**Bottom line:** Originally, little was expected of DeVan, but that opinion changed after evaluating his film from Oregon State. He is the type of center who normally gets written off because of his height and lack of athleticism, but he's sure to prove his worth once in an NFL training camp. DeVan isn't flashy, but he gets the job done.

**6TH ROUND****6 STEVE JUSTICE**  
► WAKE FOREST

6-3 1/4 289 5.15 □ FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Works to the whistle. Shows good athleticism to bend his knees and pass block with good leverage, and slides and shuffles well to mirror pass rushers' moves when using good technique. Reads line stunts and blitzes, and works well with others to neutralize them. Gets set quickly in pass protection, enabling him to block big defensive linemen. Makes side blocks well to seal defensive linemen on inside runs. Works around his man quickly to make reach blocks. Shows the initial quickness to reach linebackers on the second level, and can ride his man out of the play when balanced and under control. Makes quick trap blocks well.

**Weaknesses:** Is too thin and undersized to handle big NFL defensive tackles. Does not use hand punch aggressively or often enough in pass protection, allowing defensive tackles to jolt and drive him into the quarterback. Has a bad habit of losing focus on technique. Is not an aggressive, fire-off-the-ball run blocker who can move the pile.

**Bottom line:** Justice is a frustrating prospect because his technique slips too often, preventing

**5 KYLE DEVAN**  
► OREGON STATE

6-1 1/4 301 5.40 □ FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and competitive. Consistently maximizes his ability. Always works to the whistle. Bends his knees nicely to pass block with good leverage, helping him hold his ground against bull rushers. Shows good awareness in pass protection

**DRAFT STATUS****ON THE RISE****Kory Lichtensteiger** ► BOWLING GREEN

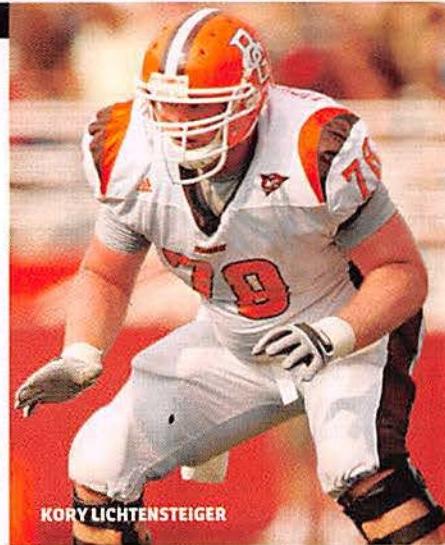
Eased most doubts with a strong week at the Senior Bowl and has clearly moved up draft boards around the league.

**SLEEPER****Kyle DeVan** ► OREGON STATE

DeVan was a consistently productive center at Oregon State despite being shorter and less athletic than ideal players at the position. He has the tools to make it in the NFL if he gets more consistent.

**UNREALIZED POTENTIAL****Cody Wallace** ► TEXAS A&M

Wallace is a good athlete with playing speed that few centers have, but he lacks strength and gets pushed around by bigger defensive linemen too often.



KORY LICHTENSTEIGER

him from playing to his ability. He has decent bulk, but doesn't play as strong as he should. Despite not playing well in college, the potential to become an NFL starter remains. Some NFL general manager will take a late-round gamble on Justice.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 7 JOHN MASTERS

> MICHIGAN STATE

6-2 1/4 286 5.50

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a smart, consistent player who competes hard. Slides his feet well after the snap, and shows good lateral quickness to redirect rushers. Plays low and stays under his pads well. Shows good knee bend and looseness in hips. Uses his hands well as a run and pass blocker. Sustains blocks, relying mostly on positioning. Makes shotgun snaps with ease.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks bulk and strength. Can be knocked around by big defensive tackles. Struggles to make one-on-one blocks when failing to get his hands inside the opponent immediately. Lacks the lower-body strength to drive defenders off the ball. Can be bull rushed due to an inability to hold his ground.

**Bottom line:** For all of Masters' good qualities, his lack of power will be an issue in the NFL. He must land with a team (like the Broncos) that uses a zone-blocking scheme.

### 8 ISAIAH WIGGINS

> ILLINOIS STATE

6-3 1/2 275 5.10

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a hard worker and smart player. Can play any of the five spots along the offensive line. Shows good speed, and is quick to snap and get into a good pass protection stance. Slides well laterally to mirror pass rushers. Shows the quickness to redirect and counter pass-rush moves back inside.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks size and strength. Struggles to move the pile at the point of attack. Too often bends at his waist, hindering his ability to explode upon contact; simply leans on the defender in hopes of hanging on long enough for the ballcarrier to get past him without being called for holding. Can be knocked back into the quarterback by bull rushers. Must play with a nastier disposition.

**Bottom line:** Wiggins struggles to keep weight on his frame and might never bulk up enough to play in the NFL. Only teams that prefer lighter offensive linemen in their zone-blocking scheme could use him at center.

### 9 JAMEY RICHARD

> BUFFALO

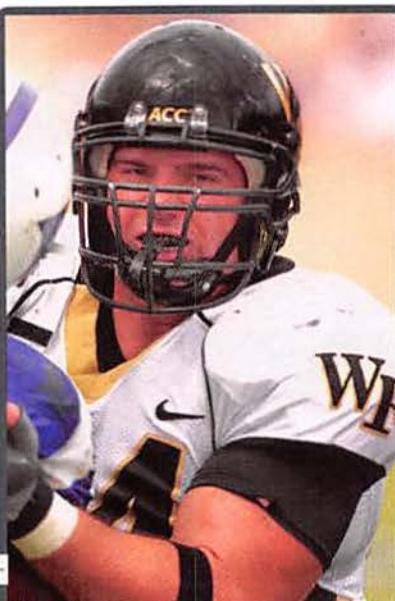
6-4 301 5.15

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows good lower-body strength and toughness. Has a quick first step at the snap. Is at his best as a run blocker and adept at helping guards in pass protection. Plays with good leverage, moving well laterally and under control.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks athleticism. Tends to stop moving his feet upon contact against quick defenders. Struggles when covered by a nose tackle. Must improve the use of his hands to fight with defenders.

**Bottom line:** Richard is strong and tough, but lacks the athleticism to stay with quick and agile defenders. He might fit better at guard in the NFL or



## SKILL SET

### BEST RUN BLOCKER

Kory Lichtensteiger > Bowling Green

While he cannot drive defensive linemen off the ball to get movement, Lichtensteiger is a consistently productive in-line seal blocker.

### BEST PASS BLOCKER

John Sullivan > Notre Dame

Sullivan consistently gets up out of his stance quickly and can put his hands on defensive linemen fast. While not dominant, he does a good job of locking up his man and keeping him on the line.

### BEST INTANGIBLES

Steve Justice > Wake Forest

Justice is a very smart young man who plays with the energy, intelligence and competitiveness that are so valuable in a center. He is very similar in style to New England's Dan Koppen.

in a zone-blocking scheme that allows him to block defenders that come his way.

### 10 JOHN ROCHFORD

MIAMI (FLA.)

6-2 280 5.10

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is smart, consistently making the correct line calls. Switches off nicely to neutralize line stunts and blitzes. Shows quick footwork to get the snap off and block quickly, enabling him to play stronger than his size would indicate. Is adept on side blocks. Reaches the second level quickly to deliver a hard initial blow to the linebacker. Is a productive long-snapper.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal bulk and size, along with the athletic ability to compensate. Shows poor blocking technique. Can be jolted and driven backward too easily by aggressive power rushers. Lacks agility to move through traffic and block his man. Struggles to maintain blocks in the open field. On in-line run blocks, he is a waist-bender who leans and reaches too often.

**Bottom line:** Rochford has moved up the rankings because of his intangibles, intelligence and competitiveness. However, he must add weight to find success in the NFL. Rochford could challenge for a roster spot as a backup center/guard.

for a roster spot as a backup center/guard, and has added value as a long snapper.

### 11 ADAM SPIEKER

MISSOURI

6-2 1/4 310 5.39

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive. Gets after defensive linemen quickly and aggressively on side blocks, locking up and sealing them. Is smart, identifying defenses quickly and adjusting blocking schemes at the line. Gets set quickly in pass protection, handling most straight-line pass rushers. Communicates well with others to neutralize line stunts and delayed blitzes. Shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete who lacks ideal flexibility, agility, speed and strength. Gets driven into the quarterback by explosive, powerful defensive tackles. Struggles to slide quickly and redirect quick pass rushers. Ends up on the ground way too often.

**Bottom line:** Spiker can make all the line calls, but was only an adequate blocker at Missouri and could struggle to be productive in the NFL. His elite intangibles are countered with limited athleticism and strength.

### 12 JORDY LIPSEY

VIRGINIA

6-3 280 5.20

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive, making all the line calls. Works well with teammates to handle line stunts and delayed blitzes. Is highly competitive. Maintains balance to keep defenders from disrupting plays. Shows surprising quickness to get through the line to block linebackers on the second level. Makes side blocks on defensive tackles to pin them. Plays to his physical ability on every snap.

**Weaknesses:** Is undersized and lacks ideal bulk. Struggles to hold his ground against bull rushers or move the pile in the running game. Is a straight-line athlete who lacks the agility to execute open-field blocks. Struggles to change directions quickly in pass protection.

**Bottom line:** Lipsey is the type of center who gets written off because he is undersized, but has all the intangibles NFL coaches covet. While he doesn't project as a starter, Lipsey could compete for a spot as a backup center/guard.

### 13 COREY ACTIS

MISSISSIPPI

6-4 295 5.20

FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Is smart, instinctive and produces better than expected. Shows quick footwork to get out of his stance and onto defensive tackles quickly, and keeps his legs churning to maintain contact. Is surprisingly effective getting through the line to seal linebackers on the second level. Sets up quickly in pass protection. Communicates well with teammates to negate line stunts.

**Weaknesses:** Is undersized. Lacks the bulk to hold his ground against aggressive bull rushers or move the pile in the running game. Doesn't have the flexibility to run block with good leverage. Too often bends at the waist and reaches, falling off blocks. Lacks the speed to pull and lead perimeter runs.

**Bottom line:** Actis was solid in college but lacks the size, strength and athleticism to produce in the NFL. He shows great intangibles that will help him challenge for a roster spot as a backup center/guard.

2008 CLASS GRADE:

**A**

# DEFENSIVE ENDS

**A** number of elite defensive end prospects could go anywhere from the first to third round. Despite several players in this group having more pure athleticism, Virginia's Chris Long is the best of the bunch and also the safest bet among the top defensive ends. He has the height, long arms, strength, intensity and athletic ability to be a highly productive strongside end.

Miami's Calais Campbell is another impressive prospect. He shares a lot of the same athletic and playing traits of former No. 1 overall pick Mario Williams. Clemson's Phillip Merling doesn't have the elite ability of Long and Campbell, but is a good athlete and competes with unbridled effort and intensity on every snap.

Second-round talent includes Florida's Derrick Harvey, USC's Lawrence Jackson and Ohio State's Vernon Gholston. All three offer certain traits, but are not polished players in all areas. While Harvey flashes the ability to make big plays pressuring the quarterback, questions remain about his inconsistent production. Jackson doesn't have the athleticism of the other top defensive ends, but is seasoned and makes more plays than expected. Gholston is the player most likely to fly up draft boards despite his on-field inconsistencies. He is tremendously built and has a load of potential.

At one point, TCU's Tommy Blake was one of the top-rated defensive ends, but missed three-fourths of his senior season due to personal issues and has fallen from a likely top-10 selection to a possible second-day pick.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-5	285	4.60
NFL Minimum	6-2	250	5.00

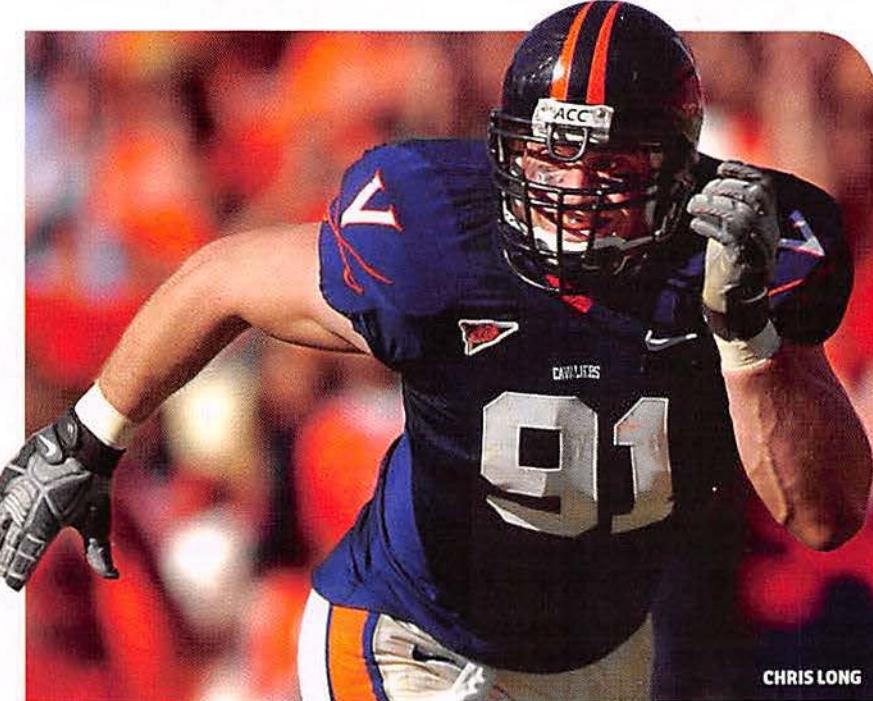
The ideal defensive end has the size and strength to stuff the run, plus the speed and athletic ability to harass the quarterback. But such a player is rare. Teams that play a 4-3 defense usually put a pass-rushing end on the weak side and a run-stuffing end on the strong side. In a 3-4 defense, both ends are run stuffers, because the scheme relies on outside linebackers to pressure the quarterback.

## 2007 DRAFT

DEFENSIVE ENDS TAKEN: 22

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	3	6	3	5	1	2	2

**Teams can take their pick of this bunch, including prizes in Long and Campbell**



CHRIS LONG

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 CHRIS LONG

&gt; VIRGINIA

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS
2004	3	2	1.0
2005	19	27	1.5
2006	32	25	4.5
2007	36	43	14.0

6-3½ 275 4.75

FINAL GRADE 8.6

**NFL comparison:** Aaron Kampman, Packers

**Against the run:** Excels on runs directed at and away from him. Fires off the snap to take on offensive linemen. Shows good technique, allowing him to hold his ground on runs at him, and disengages to disrupt plays. Beats offensive tackles inside to blow up plays in the backfield. Has the speed to catch ballcarriers in backside pursuit. Gets slowed too easily by cut blocks. **Grade: 9.0**

**Pass rush:** Is polished. Finds ways to pressure the quarterback, but does not finish with sacks consistently. Uses his quick and powerful hands well to jolt offensive tackles. Has a surprising variety of pass-rush moves (club-and-rip, club-and-arm-over, spin, jerk-and-rip). On speed rushes, he struggles to turn the corner sharply and maintain balance. With a clear shot at the quarterback, he sometimes gets upright and shows hip tightness, causing him

to overrun the sack. **Grade: 7.5**

**Initial quickness:** Shows excellent anticipation and quickness off the snap. Gets on top of offensive tackles before they set up and gets inside them easily on runs. Lacks the explosive burst off the snap of an elite pass-rush end. **Grade: 7.5**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows excellent instincts. Is smart reading and reacting to plays, sniffing them out quickly. Does not get fooled by misdirection plays or play-action fakes. Maintains good position against blockers and backside containment. **Grade: 9.0**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Shows competitiveness, instincts, hand usage and athleticism to chase plays down in pursuit. Uses quickness off the snap to get underneath offensive linemen with ease. Never quits, fighting through traffic to chase down the ball. Usually wraps up on tackles, but occasionally gets a little upright in pursuit and thus overruns and misses some tackles. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Long, the son of NFL Hall of Fame defensive end Howie Long, has learned a lot from his dad. Chris is the most polished college defensive end prospect our scouts have ever evaluated. He plays smart and shows great technique. Long should produce at a high level as an NFL starter (ideally as a strongside defensive end) and raise the entire defense's level of play.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How DEFENSIVE ENDS are graded:** **Against the run:** One-gap or two-gap, strength at point of attack, wards off. **Pass rush:** Power or finesse, moves, penetration. **Pursuit:** Gets over trash, gets to the outside, effort. **Tackling:** Wraps up, low or high, drags down, power. **Initial quickness:** Takeoff, feet, anticipates the snap. **Recognition:** Sees blocks coming, instincts, finds ball. **Neutralizes block:** One-on-one, double-teams, traps, anchors. **Key and diagnose:** Reads blocks, good feet, sees the ball.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 2 CALAIS CAMPBELL\*

> MIAMI (FLA.)

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS
2005	15	9	2.5
2006	38	17	10.0
2007	30	20	6.0

6-8 282 4.70

FINAL GRADE 8.0

**NFL comparison:** Mario Williams, Texans

**Against the run:** Chases down ballcarriers aggressively in pursuit. Reads the run away, accelerates to full speed in a blink and shows explosive closing burst to finish plays. When playing with good leverage and getting his hands on offensive linemen quickly, he shows the strength to lock them out. **Grade: 6.5**

**Pass rush:** Dominates when aggressive. Has long arms. Displays a wide array of pass-rush moves to beat offensive tackles with power, agility and speed. Once past blockers, he shows an elite explosive burst to finish sacks. Lacks the snap anticipation to take advantage of his explosive burst as a speed rusher. **Grade: 7.9**

**Initial quickness:** When aggressive, gets out of his stance and moves quickly to get his hands on offensive linemen and control them with quickness and strength. Moves down the line fast on running plays away. Is an explosive athlete, but must learn to show it in all phases. **Grade: 7.9**

**Run/pass recognition:** Reads and reacts to plays well and does not get fooled by misdirection. Shows the awareness to peel off the pass rush to pick up running backs on screen passes and flare-outs. **Grade: 7.9**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Gets started down the line quickly in backside pursuit, showing elite speed to chase down and finish plays. Even when not in the best position to make tackles, he uses his explosive closing burst, size, long arms and strength to get opponents to the ground. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Campbell will cause a lot of debate in draft rooms because of his tremendous potential. He will likely be inconsistent early in his career, but the light should go on by his second or third season. If aggressive on every snap, Campbell will be a terror to quarterbacks and ballcarriers.

## 2ND ROUND

### 3 PHILLIP MERLING

> CLEMSON

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS
2005	17	5	2.0
2006	19	20	2.5
2007	51	27	7.0

6-5 270 4.75

FINAL GRADE 7.5

**NFL comparison:** Luis Castillo, Chargers

**Against the run:** Has good size and the strength to play at the point of attack. Gets into position quickly and uses good technique to jolt offensive tackles upright to stop runs. Gets started down the line quickly and reaches full speed fast to chase down and tackle ballcarriers. **Grade: 8.0**

**Pass rush:** Is productive despite lacking elite explosiveness and speed. Uses his hands well to beat pass blocks. Jolts offensive tackles with a hard punch and drives them into the quarterback's lap. Flashes the ability to disengage from blockers and get sacks. Works to the whistle. **Grade: 8.0**

**Initial quickness:** Lacks the explosiveness off the snap to blow by offensive tackles on edge rushes, but he gets out of his stance and moves quickly to take on blocks against the run and pass. Plays

quicker than expected. **Grade: 7.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows good instincts, allowing him to move quickly off the snap. Identifies and adjusts to plays with ease. Does not get fooled by play-action fakes or misdirection. **Grade: 7.0**

**Pursuit tackling:** Makes more plays than expected in backside pursuit. Has the deceptive speed to chase down ballcarriers, plus the size, strength and competitiveness to make tackles. **Grade: 7.0**

**Bottom line:** Merling goes 100 mph every snap. He has experience at both the strongside and weakside end spots, as well as defensive tackle in some passing situations. Merling might lack the premier athleticism of some of the other prospects, but he will be a more productive NFL starter.

### 4 LAWRENCE JACKSON

> USC

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS
2004	19	13	6.0
2005	32	14	10.0
2006	26	17	4.0
2007	31	29	10.5

6-4 261 4.90

FINAL GRADE 7.0

**NFL comparison:** Victor Abiamiri, Eagles

**Against the run:** Plays well against runs at him and away. Holds his ground, sheds and makes tackle on runs at him. Plays smart on runs away, carrying out backside containment responsibilities before chasing ballcarriers down the line. **Grade: 8.0**

**Pass rush:** Lacks the explosive burst off the snap to threaten the corner as a speed rusher, but uses his quick hands and feet to beat offensive tackles around the edge with a secondary move. Shows ability to jolt offensive tackles with a hard hand punch, but lacks the ability to drive them back and pressure the quarterback as a bull rusher. **Grade: 7.0**

**Initial quickness:** Gets out of his stance and moves quickly, but does not explode off the snap to blow by offensive tackles. Shows the quickness and aggressive hands to beat run blocks and pass blocks. When close to plays, he shows explosive closing burst to the ball. **Grade: 7.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Has the natural instincts to sniff out plays and get started toward the ball quickly. Does not get fooled by misdirection plays

or fakes, and maintains backside containment.

Shows the awareness to peel off the pass rush to cover running backs on short routes. **Grade: 8.0**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Is surprisingly effective making tackles in pursuit. When bending his knees, he can break down and tackle well; occasionally overruns tackles when failing to stay low. **Grade: 7.0**

**Bottom line:** Jackson is an underrated player who consistently produces. He has the ability to play either end spot, but fits best on the strong side. Jackson will probably be drafted a little lower than he's rated here because of his lack of explosiveness. Still, he should develop into a good NFL starter who makes plays against the run and pass.

### 5 VERNON GHOLSTON\*

> OHIO STATE

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS
2005	1	0	0.0
2006	21	28	8.5
2007	25	12	14.0

6-4 260 4.75

FINAL GRADE 7.0

**NFL comparison:** Kalimba Edwards, Lions

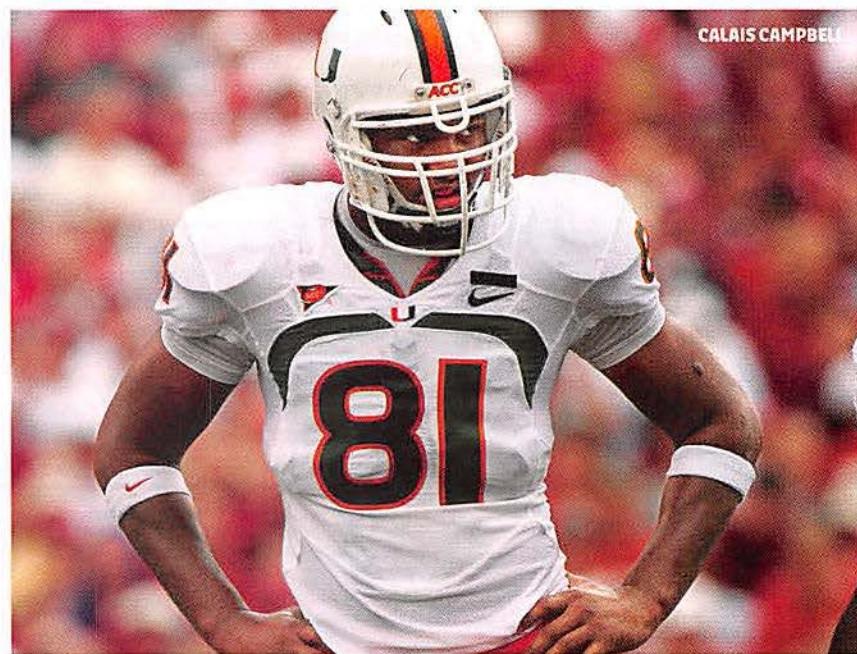
**Against the run:** Shows flashes of being a solid run stuffer, but is inconsistent and gets swallowed up by big blockers. Struggles to maintain leverage on the corner; seems to only want to rush upfield. Takes plays off. Must get stronger. **Grade: 6.0**

**Pass rush:** Has NFL speed. Gets upfield in a hurry to disrupt the pocket. Has a variety of pass-rush moves that rely on his agility, but he will not be able to bull rush many NFL linemen. **Grade: 8.0**

**Initial quickness:** When focused, he shows explosive quickness off the snap; he is inconsistent, though. If opponents run at him play after play, he seems to slow down by the fourth quarter. After his initial move, he tends to go half-speed. **Grade: 7.5**

**Run/pass recognition:** Seems locked in on rushing the passer and is slow to react to runs. Rarely moves well laterally to chase plays, laboring down the line unless the ballcarrier comes back to him. Even when keying on the run, he struggles to help much and will blow containment assignments. **Grade: 6.0**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Is slow in pursuit and does not hustle to the opposite sideline. When focused, he was a dominant college player, but often



CALAIS CAMPBELL

Douglas Jones

disappeared in games. Is a good tackler when playing hard, but is inconsistent. **Grade: 6.0**  
**Bottom line:** Gholston could fit in a 4-3 or 3-4 scheme and has the size and speed to be productive at defensive end, tackle or rush linebacker. A dynamic athlete, Gholston can dominate some games and totally disappear in others. Many NFL teams will be wary of his inconsistent effort and focus. Gholston should be used only as a pass-rush specialist for a year or two as he develops.

### 3RD ROUND

#### 6 DERRICK HARVEY\*

> FLORIDA

6-4 262 4.50

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Bryan Thomas, Jets

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness and explosiveness to beat offensive tackles around the corner. Uses his quick arm-over move to come back underneath after pushing blockers upfield. Has the speed to track down plays.

**Weaknesses:** Is thin, lacking the bulk and strength to hold his ground at the point of attack; gets driven off the line once offensive linemen lock up on him. Fails to see side blocks coming. Does not consistently pass rush aggressively, getting too upright. Struggles to shed pass blocks.

**Bottom line:** Although Harvey could have bettered his skills by returning to Florida, he might not have improved his draft stock much. However, Harvey has a long way to go to maximize his talents. He is best suited to be a pass-rush specialist, but could quickly become an NFL starter with added weight and greater intensity.

#### 7 JEREMY GEATHERS\*

> UNLV

6-2 250 4.65

FINAL GRADE 6.7

**NFL comparison:** Trent Cole, Eagles

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete, pressuring quarterbacks despite giving up 50-plus pounds to most offensive tackles. Is instinctive; finds the ball quickly and anticipates offensive tackles' movements as a pass rusher. Lacks ideal size but has the frame to add bulk. Is competitive against the run, chasing down plays in pursuit and fighting through blockers to make plays on runs at him.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks bulk. His production dropped in 2007 while playing through injuries, raising concerns about his durability and ability to produce at a high level in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Geathers has the talent to be a good NFL player, but could have moved into late-first-round territory if he'd returned to UNLV and had a strong 2008 season. He almost certainly will be drafted lower than he's rated here, but will make an impact as a pass rusher his rookie season and develop into a productive starter within a few years.

#### 8 CHRIS ELLIS

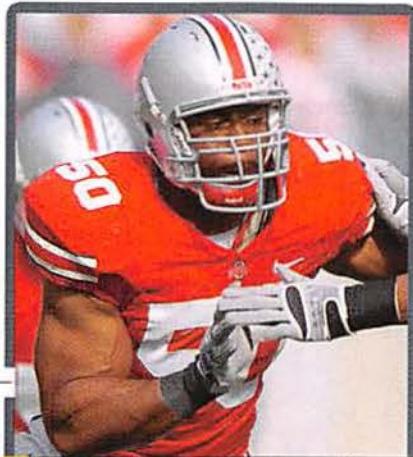
> VIRGINIA TECH

6-4 1/2 260 4.75

FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** John Engelberger, Broncos

**Strengths:** Is instinctive, getting off the snap and disrupting plays in the backfield. Gets on top of offensive tackles quickly and flashes the hand punch to drive them back into the quarterback with bull rushes and beat them with quick pass-rush moves. Never stops hustling, pressuring the



### SKILL SET

#### ► BEST PASS RUSHER

Chris Long > Virginia

While Long does not have premier explosiveness, his solid athleticism combined with outstanding pass-rush technique enables him to consistently pressure the quarterback from different alignments.

#### ► BEST RUN STOPPER

Phillip Merling > Clemson

Merling is big and plays with all-out hustle and energy on every play, shutting down running plays to his side of the field.

#### ► BIGGEST HITTER

Vernon Gholston > Ohio State

While Gholston is an inconsistent producer, he has shown the ability to make bone-crushing tackles.

#### ► BEST IN PURSUIT

Calais Campbell > Miami

Campbell consistently does a good job of coming down the line very quickly, and has the speed to close and finish the play.

#### ► MOST VERSATILE

Derrick Harvey > Florida

Harvey has the physical tools to become a very productive defensive end in a 4-3 scheme or a rush linebacker in a 3-4 defense.

quarterback even when pass-rush moves fail. Is smooth and athletic dropping into zone coverage, looking more comfortable than expected.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit thin and cannot hold his ground at the point of attack. Gets jolted and driven off the line by offensive linemen and struggles to shed blocks. Lacks the explosive burst to threaten the corner as a speed rusher.

**Bottom line:** Ellis is a quick defensive end who plays with rare intensity on every snap. He will be a productive end in a 4-3 scheme, but also has the athleticism to be a rush linebacker in a 3-4 defense, where he would be a more productive pass rusher. Ellis could move up draft boards if he adds bulk and improves his 40 time.

### 4TH ROUND

#### 9 JASON JONES

> EASTERN MICHIGAN

6-5 1/2 272 4.95

FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Shows quick feet and burst off the snap, plus the edge speed to threaten the corner.

Displays the quickness and agility to change directions to beat offensive tackles one-on-one. Fights hard every snap. Is smart and has an excellent work ethic.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw and needs a lot of technique work. Played defensive tackle most of the time in college, and now must adjust to playing defensive end. Does not identify plays as quickly as teammates, raising concerns about his instincts.

**Bottom line:** Jones is an interesting prospect. He was recruited as a basketball player out of high school, and played tight end as a freshman in college before moving to defense. Usually there are major concerns about small-school prospects switching positions, but Jones shows excellent character, work habits and smarts. He will be an NFL backup early and should eventually become a productive starter in either a 4-3 or a 3-4 scheme.

#### 10 DARRELL ROBERTSON

> GEORGIA TECH

6-3 1/2 247 4.90

FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a great athlete and impact defender against both the run and pass. When bull rushing aggressively, and with leverage, he delivers hard punches to offensive tackles and has the strength to drive them back into the quarterback. Shows quick footwork and explosiveness to break back underneath linemen with an inside pass-rush. On zone blitzes, he is smooth dropping into coverage.

**Weaknesses:** His production does not match his talent. Lacks explosiveness as a pass rusher. Is often a step late moving off the snap. Tends to get upright as a pass rusher and lacks moves, struggling to defeat offensive tackles. Gets too upright against the run, hindering his strength at the point of attack, which causes him to get tied up. Must get stronger and add 10-15 pounds.

**Bottom line:** Robertson has the talent to perform much better than he did at Georgia Tech, and most likely will be drafted higher than his college production warrants. He might be best suited to play defensive end in a 4-3 defense, but has the athleticism for linebacker in a 3-4.

#### 11 BRYAN MATTISON

> IOWA

6-2 1/2 279 4.91

FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Has a good build and plays bigger than his size. Is a better athlete than expected. Gets out of his stance quickly to take on blockers. Plays with good leverage. When bull rushing aggressively, he drives offensive tackles into the quarterback. Is a good pass rusher on line stunts.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the elite athleticism and explosive burst to be a speed rusher. Fails to consistently shed run blocks at the point of attack. Does not use his hands well to protect his legs from cut blocks.

**Bottom line:** A force against the run and as a power rusher, Mattison is a good NFL prospect, even though many do not see him in the same light.

#### 12 TITUS BROWN

> MISSISSIPPI STATE

6-2 1/2 239 4.75

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a productive pass rusher who beats offensive tackles and attacks the quarterback. Makes big plays behind the line on runs away; gets started down the line quickly and shows good speed chasing down ballcarriers. Uses his hands well to fight through blocks.

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

**Phillip Merling** > *Clemson*

Merling was viewed as having made a bad decision to come out early until NFL scouts started to break down his film and saw his strong on-field play.

### ON THE DECLINE

**Chase Ortiz** > *TCU*

Teams were really interested to see him at the East-West Shrine Game because he was so productive at TCU, but Ortiz looked tiny and lacked athleticism.

### SLEEPER

**Jeremy Geathers** > *UNLV*

Geathers is a junior who came out early for the draft and has the size, potential, athleticism and natural ability to become a very productive pass rusher in the NFL.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

**Tommy Blake** > *TCU*

For a player who dominated in 2006, his play fell off drastically last year, and Blake now has an uphill battle to show he can get back to his true potential.

### BIGGEST RISK

**Derrick Harvey** > *Florida*

Harvey is a top athlete, but wasn't a consistently productive player at Florida, which raises some concern given he's considered a first-round pick.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit short and light to be an every-down player; must bulk up to at least 255 pounds to become a starter. Must develop more pass-rush moves to be as productive in the NFL as he was in college. Needs to play with better technique and stay under control to avoid blown assignments and mental mistakes.

**Bottom line:** Brown is a linebacker/end 'tweener who might fit best as an outside linebacker in a 3-4 scheme if he does not add weight. At worst, he could be a pass-rush specialist for a 4-3 team and special teams demon.

## 5TH ROUND

### 13 JEREMY THOMPSON

> *WAKE FOREST*

6-4 $\frac{3}{8}$  264 4.82

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the competitiveness and instincts to consistently be around the ball and make plays. Shows quick footwork to get out of his stance and take on run blocks with good leverage. Gets his hands on offensive linemen quickly, holding his ground and forcing plays back inside. On running plays away, he maintains containment, then accelerates down the line to find ballcarriers. Shows quick footwork, agility and hand usage to beat offensive tackles inside.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks an explosive burst to threaten the corner as a speed rusher. Does not consistently pressure the quarterback and offers little variety of pass-rush moves. Is not a consistent wrap-up tackler; often ends up high and overruns plays or lunges at ballcarriers.

**Bottom line:** Thompson, whose brother, Orrin, spent much of the 2007 season with the Packers, is tough to evaluate because he is somewhat of



PHILLIP MERLING

a one-dimensional run stopper. Jeremy fits best at defensive end in a 4-3 system but shows the versatility to play inside or outside linebacker in a 3-4 scheme.

### 14 CHRIS HARRINGTON

> *TEXAS A&M*

6-4 $\frac{3}{8}$  259 4.90

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is tall and athletic. Consistently disrupts plays. After reading runs away, he accelerates to full speed quickly to chase down ballcarriers. When bull rushing aggressively, he shows the strength and hand usage to jolt and drive offensive tackles back. Is involved in far more plays than expected.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks explosiveness off the snap as an edge pass rusher. Pressures the quarterback only through effort and strength. Does not use hands well to protect his legs from cut blocks. Must add 10-15 pounds of muscle.

**Bottom line:** While Harrington does not jump out on film, he plays strong at the point of attack and pressures the quarterback through sheer effort. He must add weight to become more than an NFL backup.

### 15 WALLACE GILBERRY

> *ALABAMA*

6-2 $\frac{1}{2}$  263 4.93

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is athletic and well-built. Is productive against the run and pass, getting off the snap and into plays quickly. Shows good strength at the point of attack; sheds blocks and makes a lot of tackles. Hustles and chases down a lot of ballcarriers. When bull rushing aggressively, he shows the strength to jolt offensive tackles with his hand punch and drive them back into the quarterback. Is smart and instinctive, reading and reacting to plays quickly. Carries out containment assignments.

**Weaknesses:** Must develop more pass-rush moves. When unable to get his hands on offensive linemen first, he struggles to shed blocks. Lacks the explosive burst to threaten the corner. Must improve his hand usage to protect his legs from cut blocks.

**Bottom line:** Gilberry, who considered entering the 2007 draft, was wise to return to Alabama. His play greatly improved as a senior, elevating his draft stock. Gilberry is not the type of elite pass rusher who gets drafted in the first round, but has the tools to develop into a quality NFL starter who is productive in all phases.

### 16 JOHNNY DINGLE\*

> *WEST VIRGINIA*

6-3 $\frac{1}{8}$  280 4.90

FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Looks like the ideal strongside defensive end in uniform. Is a good athlete, showing quick footwork, agility and the speed to chase down plays. Flashes deceptive quickness off the snap, reaching offensive tackles before they get set. Shows the strength to stack up run blockers and force ballcarriers back inside, and flashes the ability to shed blockers to make the tackle. Always hustles and makes a number of tackles downfield.

**Weaknesses:** Is a defensive end/tackle 'tweener. Lacks the bulk and aggressiveness to play strong inside. Struggles to shed blocks. Is a better athlete than football player.

**Bottom line:** Dingle started his career at Florida but never played because of academic problems. Teams should not draft him early because he lacks aggressiveness and edge-rush ability. He fits as a late-round prospect for 4-3 teams and a mid-round prospect for 3-4 teams.

### 17 ROB JACKSON

> *KANSAS STATE*

6-3 265 4.85

FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Never stops hustling and loves the game. Shows good all-around skills. Is quick and agile. Gets back into plays even when blocked initially.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite physical qualities in any area. Needs work on his lower-body strength to become a solid run stopper. Must improve ability to fight off blocks and learn to read plays better.

**Bottom line:** Jackson, a junior-college transfer, was a solid pass rusher in the Big 12. He is ideally suited to be a backup defensive end in a 3-4 scheme but must add 15-20 pounds for the role.

### 18 KEN IWEMBEMA

> *IOWA*

6-4 $\frac{1}{4}$  268 4.84

FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness and agility to change direction and make plays. Has a quick spin move and beats offensive tackles inside with a quick burst underneath. Is smart and reads plays well. Accelerates quickly down the line to tackle ballcarriers from behind.

**Weaknesses:** Should make more plays than he does. Must become much more consistent shedding blocks at the point of attack. Lacks the explosiveness to threaten the corner as a speed rusher. Does not work hard every snap. Tends to play upright and struggles to hold his ground. Often looks mechanical. Does not make many impact plays.

**Bottom line:** Iwembema is a frustrating prospect. He flashes a lot of ability but just isn't as productive as he should be. Iwembema has the talent to be a quality NFL starter in a 4-3 scheme, but he must become more aggressive.

**19 TOMMY BLAKE**

&gt; TCU

6-2 1/4 287 4.60

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** When 100 percent, he is an elite prospect. Is athletic, with the quickness, speed and explosive closing burst to chase down plays all over the field. Shows acceleration and burst to turn the corner and crush the quarterback. Fakes and freezes offensive tackles on pass rushes, and then explodes past them. Is surprisingly effective with a fast spin move, and drives blockers into the quarterback with a bull rush. Shows a rare competitive spirit, going all out on every snap.

**Weaknesses:** Missed a good portion of the 2007 season because of depression and social anxiety disorder. Once he returned, he was overweight and nowhere near the player he was as a junior. If unable to deal with the stress that comes with being an elite prospect, he could crumble in the NFL spotlight.

**Bottom line:** Blake was an elite end for TCU in 2006 and showed the athleticism to play linebacker in a 3-4 scheme. He was a surefire top-five overall pick at one point, but his struggles on and off the field in 2007 will keep him from being selected anywhere near that high. If he straightens himself out, Blake has tremendous potential. However, the red flags signal that he'll likely slip into the fifth round.

**20 ERIC FOSTER**

&gt; RUTGERS

6-1 1/8 255 4.85

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is athletic, with the quickness and burst to get off the snap in a flash to threaten the corner

as a speed rusher. Gets his hands into passing lanes to tip passes. Accelerates down the line fast to chase down ballcarriers. Is versatile and instinctive, productive at multiple positions.

**Weaknesses:** Is not nearly as productive when offensive linemen get their hands on him. Lacks the strength to hold ground at the point of attack. Does not consistently get a push when bull rushing. Struggles to shed blocks. Must improve his ability to finish sacks when close to the quarterback.

**Bottom line:** Foster jumps out with his ability to pressure the quarterback, whether lined up at defensive end or tackle. He has the thick lower body of a defensive tackle but the quickness, burst and speed of an end. Foster would be best suited in a one-gap, 4-3 scheme.

**7TH ROUND****21 ALEX BOSTON**

&gt; FLORIDA STATE

6-2 1/4 261 4.85

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Has the size, athleticism, long arms and competitiveness to play in the NFL. Bull rushes aggressively, using his long arms to jolt offensive tackles and drive them back into the quarterback. Shows the agility to defeat pass blocks in the open field. Holds his ground at the point of attack, and flashes ability to shed blocks and make tackles.

**Weaknesses:** Is not an explosive or polished pass rusher, and cannot threaten the corner as a speed rusher. Lacks a variety of pass-rush moves. Struggles to be consistently productive.

**Bottom line:** Boston needs a lot of work, but is worth a gamble late in the draft, when there will be virtually no defensive ends with his tools available.

**22 CHASE ORTIZ**

&gt; TCU

6-1 1/8 240 4.94

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Displays good instincts; is always around the ball and disrupts lots of plays. Has a quick first step off the snap. When aggressive in the pass rush, he jolts offensive tackles back into the quarterback. Chases down ballcarriers from the back side.

**Weaknesses:** Has short arms and lacks ideal height and bulk. Does not always use his hands aggressively. Struggles to shed blockers once they lock up on him.

**Bottom line:** Ortiz played opposite Tommy Blake at TCU and no doubt benefited from the attention opponents paid to Blake. Still, Ortiz should make more plays than he does. He is ideally suited to be a backup end in a 4-3 defense but must add 15-20 pounds to hold up in the NFL.

**23 KENDALL LANGFORD**

&gt; HAMPTON

6-5 1/8 275 5.13

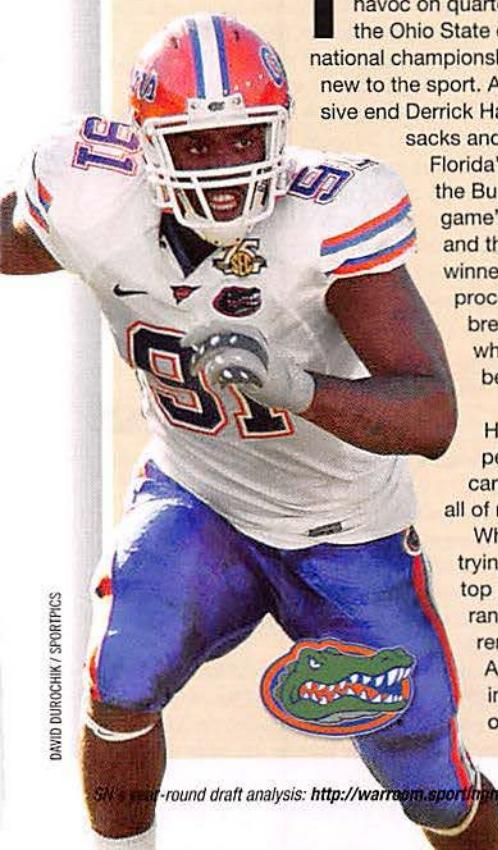
FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is huge and plays with good power at the point of attack. Shows good lower-body strength to occupy blockers on runs at him. Is a good athlete for his size.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite athleticism, speed and explosiveness. Is raw and rarely uses proper technique. Lacks lateral quickness. Gets lazy, especially

**IN PROFILE****DERRICK HARVEY**

FLORIDA



The player who wreaked the most havoc on quarterback Troy Smith and the Ohio State offense during the 2006 national championship game was relatively new to the sport. As a sophomore, defensive end Derrick Harvey racked up three sacks and a fumble recovery in Florida's 41-14 upset win over the Buckeyes. He claimed the game's Defensive MVP honor and the Heisman Trophy winner's confidence in the process, capping an unlikely breakout season during which Harvey hadn't even been the regular starter.

"I was just ready,"

Harvey says of the best performance of his short career. "It felt good—like all of my hard work paid off."

What may have been a trying transformation into a top prospect in the college ranks had also proven a remarkably rapid one.

After just his fifth season in organized football (and only five college starts),

Harvey was already considered a candidate to turn pro.

"Every game I just kept improving and improving," he says of his breakout 2006 campaign. "I'm still improving now."

Harvey played basketball all of his life, up until his sophomore year at Roosevelt High in Greenbelt, Md. When then-Roosevelt coach Rick Houchens saw Harvey's imposing frame charging down the court one day, he thought it would be a better fit for the gridiron. Houchens persuaded the player to give it a shot.

Harvey, now 6-4 and 262 pounds, never played basketball again.

"I figured I wasn't getting any taller," he says. "I had to get used to it at first, but once I got it, I just took [off] from there."

His senior year at Roosevelt, Harvey recorded 150 tackles with five forced fumbles and set a state record with 31 sacks. He signed with the Gators as one of the top recruits in the nation, then redshirted to further develop his newfound game.

The next year, Harvey had just six tackles and a sack in nine appearances. In the first three games of 2006, he recorded only one tackle and four assists, but accumulated 17 total tackles, 9.5 for a loss and eight sacks over the next six contests. Harvey finished the season with 35 tackles, 13 for a loss and 11 sacks, then put up 49-17-8.5 during his only full season as a starter in 2007.

Harvey, who runs a 4.5 in the 40-yard dash and displays uncommon athleticism for his build, is now a strong candidate to be drafted on the first day. He looks ready to contribute right away, but his true potential remains unknown.

"The sky's the limit," Harvey says. "I'll keep working hard, and who knows where I end up in three, four years."

A lot can happen in such a short time.

—Mike Giglio

late in games. Does not play with a wide base consistently, getting driven to the ground. Lacks the short-area burst to be an impact pass rusher.

**Bottom line:** Langford is a 'tweener. He looks like a thin defensive tackle but plays more like a defensive end. Teams should be careful not to over draft Langford, who must improve his technique and intensity to maximize his potential.

## 24 KURT HOUT

> FERRIS STATE

6-1½ 278 4.90

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Plays hard and under control, setting the tempo for teammates. Is strong and plays the run well. Gets good leverage and is tough to block when firing off the snap low and hard. Has natural pass-rush ability. Is smart and locates the ball quickly. Uses his hands well to shed blocks. Is a strong tackler who looks to punish ballcarriers. Gets lots of pressure and hits on the quarterback.

**Weaknesses:** Is a 'tweener lacking the height to play defensive end and the speed to play outside linebacker. Did not make as many tackles as he should have against Division II competition.

**Bottom line:** Hout plays the game the way it's supposed to be played, and his style is infectious. He is a solid pass rusher who beats opponents off the corner, but always seems to be a step late to get the sack. Hout has the ability to play in the NFL and will likely be drafted late.

## 25 JOE CLERMOND

> PITTSBURGH

6-2½ 250 4.80

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Excels at getting inside reach blocks, keeping blockers on his back and flying downfield. Shows a quick first step off the snap.

Is highly competitive; offensive tackles often draw holding penalties against him. Shows the athleticism to play rush linebacker in a 3-4 scheme.

**Weaknesses:** Is undersized, lacking the bulk and strength to consistently pressure the quarterback. Once offensive linemen lock up on him, he struggles to shed them. Lacks a variety of pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** Clermond will cause a lot of debate in draft rooms. He looks like a linebacker but is more effective moving forward to make plays than dropping off the ball. Clermond projects as a backup who contributes best as a pass-rush specialist.

## 26 NICK SCHLEKEWAY

> BOISE STATE

6-3½ 262 4.90

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Makes plays through all-out effort. Has better speed than expected. When rushing the quarterback, he flashes good use of his hands to defeat offensive tackles. Jolts offensive tackles back when bull rushing aggressively.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks explosive burst off the snap to threaten the corner as a speed rusher. Does not consistently rush the quarterback aggressively; tends to get upright and allow blockers to get hold of him. Lacks the burst to finish sacks.

**Bottom line:** Schlekeway is the type of defensive end who often gets written off because of his lack of explosiveness and inconsistent production. However, he has a knack for making plays in key situations. Schlekeway projects as a top-notch backup and rotation contributor.

## 27 MARQUE FOUNTAIN

> OKLAHOMA STATE

6-1 260 4.80

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, speed and explosiveness to make plays all over the field.

field. Chases down ballcarriers. Has the athleticism to shoot the gaps. Shows surprising strength when bull rushing, jolting offensive tackles and driving them back into the quarterback.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw. Must learn to use his hands better. Has no real pass-rush moves. Gets overaggressive, crashing down inside only to get burned on counter plays and rollouts to the outside.

**Bottom line:** Fountain is far more productive against the run, but has the tools to develop into a good pass rusher down the road. He fits best at end in a 4-3 defense and could be worth a late-round pick as a developmental prospect.

## 28 SHAWN RICHARDSON

> TENNESSEE STATE

6-1½ 248 4.58

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete who consistently disrupts plays. Moves quickly off the snap. Works hard. Has better than expected strength as a pass rusher and jolts offensive tackles back. Gets his hands up to tip passes. Shows the quickness to get inside reach blocks, keeping blockers on his back while chasing down ballcarriers. Shoots the gaps nicely to blow up running plays in the backfield.

**Weaknesses:** Is a defensive end/outside linebacker 'tweener. Will struggle to play against NFL offensive linemen. Lacks the explosive burst to threaten the corner as a speed rusher. Tends to overrun some tackles and sacks.

**Bottom line:** Richardson is smart and makes plays despite lacking ideal size and athleticism. He could become a solid NFL backup who contributes as a short-yardage linebacker and special teams player.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 29 DALLAS FLYNN

> NORTHWEST MISSOURI STATE

6-4½ 258 4.95

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is smart and carries out assignments. Flashes the ability to shed blocks and make tackles. As a pass rusher, he has flexibility and the strength to jolt offensive tackles backwards.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks bulk. Has limited quickness, explosiveness and speed. Cannot threaten the corner as a pass rusher, and lacks the burst to beat offensive tackles underneath with inside moves. Must shed blocks more quickly.

**Bottom line:** Flynn is a productive small-school player with good intangibles. However, his lack of pass-rush skills will prevent him from being more than a backup in the NFL.

### 30 LOUIS HOLMES

> ARIZONA

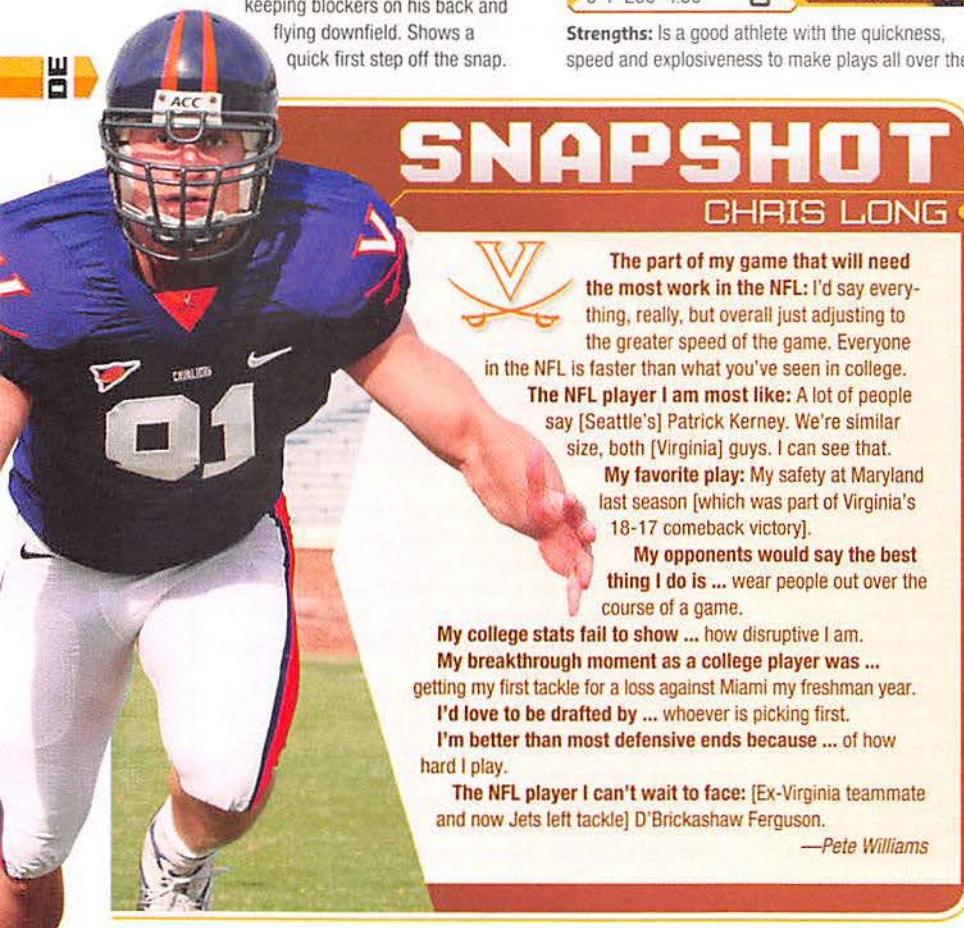
6-4½ 268 4.80

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Looks the part of an NFL defensive end. Is fast and makes plays down the line. Uses his body control to pressure the pocket.

**Weaknesses:** Is late firing off the snap. Does not show good instincts or awareness. Struggles to change directions in the open field. Does not use his hands well as a pass rusher. Plays soft at times.

**Bottom line:** Holmes is a better athlete than football player. NFL coaches and scouts will be impressed by his potential, making him a high-priority free agent or possible late-round pick.



**SNAPSHOT**

CHRIS LONG

The part of my game that will need the most work in the NFL: I'd say everything, really, but overall just adjusting to the greater speed of the game. Everyone in the NFL is faster than what you've seen in college.

The NFL player I am most like: A lot of people say [Seattle's] Patrick Kerney. We're similar size, both [Virginia] guys. I can see that.

My favorite play: My safety at Maryland last season [which was part of Virginia's 18-17 comeback victory].

My opponents would say the best thing I do is ... wear people out over the course of a game.

My college stats fail to show ... how disruptive I am.

My breakthrough moment as a college player was ... getting my first tackle for a loss against Miami my freshman year.

I'd love to be drafted by ... whoever is picking first.

I'm better than most defensive ends because ... of how hard I play.

The NFL player I can't wait to face: [Ex-Virginia teammate and now Jets left tackle] D'Brickashaw Ferguson.

—Pete Williams

2008 CLASS GRADE:

**A-**

# DEFENSIVE TACKLES

SU's Glenn Dorsey and USC's Sedrick Ellis have separated themselves from the rest of the pack and are the only sure-fire first-round picks. However, there are at least 10 other defensive tackles who could be drafted anywhere from the middle of the first round to the end of the third, depending on teams' needs. Even though Dorsey and Ellis are shorter than ideal, they have the athleticism, instincts, competitiveness and playmaking ability to overcome their lack of size.

Auburn's Pat Sims is a well-built tackle with the foot quickness, explosiveness and playing speed to be productive in any type of defensive scheme. Like most underclassmen, he's still not as polished or consistent as some seniors, but the talent is there.

Iowa State's Ahtyba Rubin is moving up teams' draft boards. The massive tackle really grabbed scouts' attention during the weigh-in at the East-West Shrine Game.

After Rubin, there are five other solid prospects. Two of them, Florida State's Letroy Guion and Andre Fluellen, both weigh under 300 pounds but have the talent to be very productive starters if used correctly. While Arkansas' Marcus Harrison and Arizona's Lionel Dotson have not received much national recognition, both possess good size and the competitiveness to eventually become solid starters.

One player with question marks who will be drafted very high is North Carolina's Kentwan Balmer. He is a great athlete who flashes the ability to be an impact player, but struggles to be consistently productive and doesn't play with the passion or intensity expected of a high draft selection.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-4	315	4.90
NFL Minimum	6-1	280	5.20

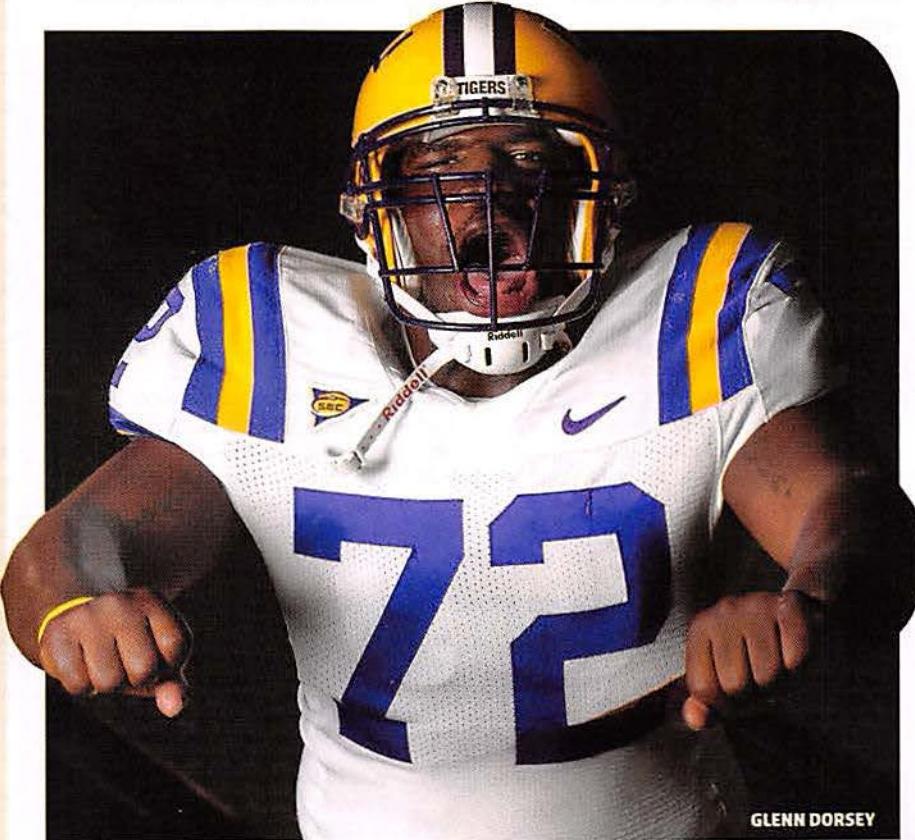
Defensive tackles usually fall into one of two groups: two-gap run stuffers or one-gap penetrators. A run-stuffing tackle does not make many plays in the backfield, but he takes up a lot of space and keeps blockers off the linebackers. Penetrating tackles are more likely to make a big play or get to the quarterback in the passing game, but they tend to be undersized and struggle at times to hold up against the run.

## 2007 DRAFT

### DEFENSIVE TACKLES TAKEN: 20

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	3	1	4	4	4	2	2

**Dorsey, Ellis will help any team right away, while several others have eventual value**



GLENN DORSEY

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 GLENN DORSEY

&gt; LSU

FINAL GRADE 8.5		
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS
2004	6	12
2005	16	12
2006	22	42
2007	39	30

**NFL comparison:** Warren Sapp

**Against the run:** Bursts off the snap, shooting the gaps to blow up plays in the backfield. When playing with good leverage, he stacks up blockers at the point of attack and sheds them in time to make tackles. Gets inside reach blocks, keeping blockers on his back. **Grade: 8.5**

**Pass rush:** Is disruptive and productive. Moves into the backfield to apply pressure, getting sacks or forcing passes. Has the quick footwork, agility and quick hands to change directions and shed one-on-one pass blocks. Lacks ideal height and arm length to fight off linemen who use aggressive hand

punches. Despite being short and lacking ideal bulk, he shows the power to bull rush; drives opponents backward with surprising ease. **Grade: 8.5**

**Initial quickness:** Exploses off the snap to shoot gaps. Often gets into the gap before a blocker gets set. Uncorks and explodes into bigger opponents. When near a target, bends his knees and delivers a hard blow. **Grade: 9.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Is intelligent. Reads screen passes and draw plays well, reacting in a blink. Must use his hands more consistently to ward off blockers. **Grade: 8.5**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Reaches full speed quickly. Has the elite speed to track down ballcarriers in backside pursuit. Misses an occasional tackle going for the highlight hit, but is consistent overall. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Dorsey is tough, competitive and disruptive as a pass rusher and run stuffer. He will be an impact player early in his career and make game-changing plays when his team needs them most.

• Denotes underclassman

**How DEFENSIVE TACKLES are graded:** **Against the run:** One-gap or two-gap, strength at point of attack, wards off. **Pass rush:** Power or finesse, moves, penetration. **Pursuit:** Gets over trash, gets to the outside, effort. **Tackling:** Wraps up, low or high, drags down, power. **Initial quickness:** Takeoff, feet, anticipates the snap. **Recognition:** Sees blocks coming, instincts, finds ball. **Neutralizes block:** One-on-one, double-teams, traps, anchors. **Key and diagnose:** Reads blocks, good feet, sees the ball.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 2 SEDRICK ELLIS

> USC

6-0 7s	308	4.85		FINAL GRADE	8.0
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS			
2004	0	2	0.0		
2005	28	22	4.5		
2006	17	17	4.5		
2007	29	29	8.5		

NFL comparison: Rod Coleman, Falcons

Against the run: Blows up blocking schemes to disrupt running plays. Gets inside "reach" blocks quickly. Chases down ballcarriers. Disrupts the play enough for teammates to make the tackle. Has the strength and quick hands to jolt offensive linemen upright on runs directly at him. Grade: 8.0

Pass rush: Lacks a variety of pass-rush moves; most quarterback pressures come from his all-out effort. Shows an inconsistent first step; when not aggressive off the snap, he does not pressure the quarterback. Grade: 6.0

Initial quickness: Is consistently the first defensive lineman moving at the snap. Does not always explode through the gap. Grade: 7.5

Run/pass recognition: Shows good instincts to read plays quickly, getting started toward the ball right away. Reads screen passes quickly, gets outside, avoids blockers and makes tackles on the ballcarrier. Grade: 8.5

Pursuit/tackling: Makes lots of plays in pursuit.

Gets underneath blocks and has the speed to chase down running backs. Is a good tackler who consistently maintains good balance and plays under control. Grade: 8.5

Bottom line: Ellis is short, but makes more plays than most defensive tackles. He blows up a ton of plays in the backfield because of his quickness and explosiveness, and his energy and competitiveness rub off on teammates. Ellis will be productive in most 4-3 or 3-4 schemes. In a 4-3, he fits best as an "under tackle" on a team that uses a nose tackle. In a 3-4, he is best suited at defensive end on a speed-based defense.

inside reach blocks, keeping the blocker on his back while chasing the ballcarrier. Is not always aggressive and sometimes gets upright and loses leverage. Grade: 7.5

Pass rush: Shows the quickness and strength to shoot gaps, and does not hesitate to hit the quarterback right after the throw. Bull rushes with good leverage and hand usage; jolts offensive linemen and drives them backward. Is inconsistent. Grade: 6.9

Initial quickness: Shows the quick footwork, instincts and ability to anticipate the snap to move toward the ball quickly. Is an explosive athlete who overpowers blockers when using good technique and aggressiveness. Exploses up into ballcarriers to deliver violent hits. Grade: 8.0

Run/pass recognition: Is intelligent and does not get fooled or pulled in the wrong direction. Reads plays quickly. Grade: 7.5

Pursuit/tackling: Gets inside backside blockers on runs outside, and has the speed to chase down ballcarriers. When close, shows the explosive closing burst to finish the play. Shows the athletic ability, strength and competitiveness to consistently knock ballcarriers to the ground. Grade: 8.0

Bottom line: Sims will likely be taken on Day 1, but would have been drafted much higher had he spent another season in school improving his game. No one questions whether Sims has first-round talent. He has rare athletic ability and makes impact plays against the pass and run. What's missing is consistency in aggressiveness and technique. Whatever teams drafts him will have to whip Sims into shape and make him hungry to play. He should become a productive starter after a season or two as a backup.

## 2ND ROUND

### 3 PAT SIMS\*

> AUBURN

6-4	304	5.10		FINAL GRADE	7.5
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS			
2004	3	0	0.0		
2006	9	7	3.0		
2007	29	8	4.5		

NFL comparison: Jason Hatcher, Cowboys

Against the run: Is a disruptive force when playing with good leverage, aggressiveness and hand usage. Has the bulk and strength to hold up at the point of attack against one-on-one blocks, clogging the hole or shedding blocks to make tackles. Gets

## SNAPSHOT

### SEDRICK ELLIS



**My breakthrough moment as a college player:** The year after Mike Patterson [USC's All-America nose tackle from 2002-04, who is now a starter for the Philadelphia Eagles] left, just getting on the field and being able to start fresh full time. Once you get a hold of it, once you start being on the field for a good amount of time, you start to get the hang of it.

**My college stats fail to show ... my motor.** Stats don't show how intense someone plays, or how hard he works on the field, even when the ball's not going his way.

**My opponents would say the best thing I do is ...** I use a combination of speed and power to the best of my abilities.

**My favorite football player of all time:** I don't have any favorite players. I just kind of admire the game as a whole.

**The NFL player I can't wait to face:** There are a lot of USC offensive linemen in the pros right now. Deuce Lutui [drafted in the second round in 2006] plays for Arizona; Ryan Kalil [taken in the second round last year] plays for Carolina. I'm looking forward to playing against those guys again.

**Five years from now, I will be known as ...** just as a game player. A football player who comes and competes in the NFL. Somebody who's just a team guy, who goes out there and contributes.

**My advice to players entering college this year:** Come in shape. All those players who are All-Americans in high school and things like that, if they take that summer off [after graduation], guys will be running circles around them.

—Mike Giglio

## 3RD ROUND

### 4 AHTYBA RUBIN

> IOWA STATE

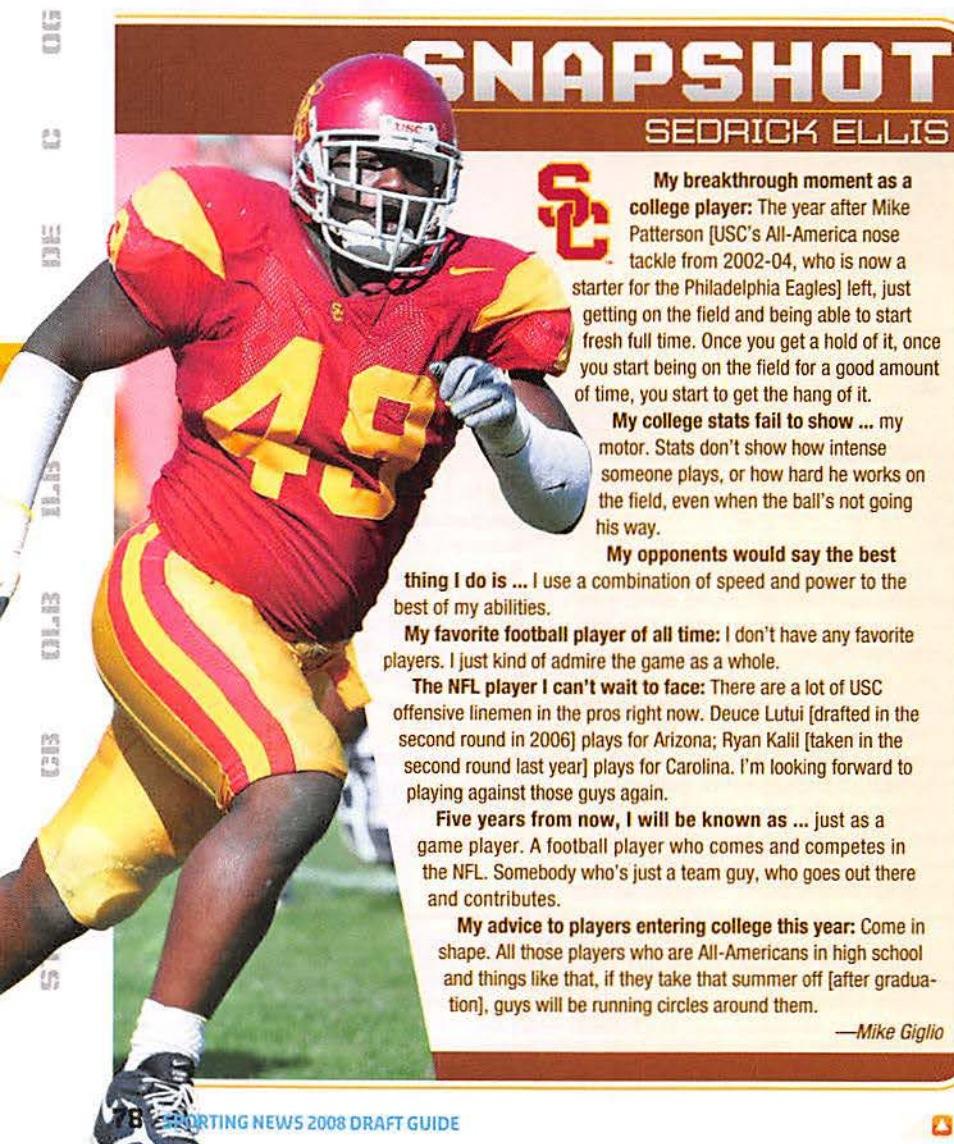
6-2 1/2	321	5.30		FINAL GRADE	6.9
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS			
2006	18	16	1.0		
2007	24	18	1.5		

NFL comparison: Casey Hampton, Steelers

**Strengths:** Is well built with excellent natural strength. When playing with good leverage and hand usage, he is a force at the point of attack. Stands up run blockers, holds his ground, sheds blocks and make tackles on inside running plays. Is quick and strong enough to get inside reach blocks to chase down ballcarriers on running plays away. Consistently holds his ground against double-team run blocks. Has surprising athleticism when dropping into coverage on zone blitzes.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosiveness to shoot gaps and blow up plays. At times, he gets caught upright at the point of attack, allowing offensive linemen to lock him up and ride him out of plays. Lacks good pass-rush moves beyond the bull rush. Does not use his hands well to protect his legs from cut blocks.

**Bottom line:** Defensive tackles who don't pressure the quarterback or make a lot of tackles tend to be written off. However, Rubin consistently occupies blockers. For NFL teams seeking a true nose tackle, he has what it takes to become a productive starter with refined technique. Rubin fits best as a nose tackle in a power 3-4 or a nose tackle in a 4-3 scheme that uses a nose tackle/under tackle system.



## 5 ANDRE FLUELLEN

► FLORIDA STATE

6-1 $\frac{1}{2}$	285	5.10	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 6.5</b>
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	
2004	4	2	0.0
2005	8	18	2.0
2006	16	12	0.5
2007	10	11	2.0

NFL comparison: La'Roi Glover, Rams

**Strengths:** Gets off the snap quickly to shoot the gaps and pressure the quarterback. Blows up running plays in the backfield before they get started. Shows the flexibility to bend his knees and play with good leverage. Flashes good hand usage to take on run-blocking offensive linemen strong at the point of attack, holds his ground, clogs the middle and shuts down inside runs. Plays bigger and stronger than measured size.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks bulk. At his current size, he will struggle to be as effective in the NFL as he was in college. Will struggle to shed blocks once offensive linemen lock him up. Lacks a repertoire of pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** Fluellen's lack of bulk is cause for concern, but his production shows he has what it takes to play in the NFL. He definitely improved his stock at the Senior Bowl, consistently beating blocks to disrupt plays. Fluellen only fits in a one-gap, attacking-style defense—ideally a 4-3 scheme.

## 6 MARCUS HARRISON

► ARKANSAS

6-2 $\frac{1}{4}$	285	5.10	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 6.5</b>
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NFL comparison: Barry Cofield, Giants

**Strengths:** Gets moving quickly at the snap. When aggressive against the run, he has the strength to deliver a hand punch to jolt blockers upright. Is strong enough to fight through double-teams. Shows good athleticism to get off the ground after being cut and back into pursuit of the ballcarrier. **Weaknesses:** Is a bit inconsistent. Must learn to attack every play. Tends to get upright and become a non-factor. Lacks the explosiveness off the snap to shoot gaps. Does not consistently use his hands to shed blockers or protect his legs from cut blocks. Lacks a variety of pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** Harrison is tough to evaluate but shouldn't be written off. He will be a little inconsistent early in his career as he adjusts to the NFL, but after a season or two, he'll become a productive starter who makes impact plays.

## 7 LETROY GUION\*

► FLORIDA STATE

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$	295	5.05	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 6.4</b>
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NFL comparison: Shaun Cody, Lions

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with rare quickness, explosiveness and speed. Is productive when using his hands aggressively. Gets backfield penetration when opponents try to reach-block him, and chases down ballcarriers with surprising ease. Has the athleticism and balance to beat cut blocks and come down the line to finish plays.

**Weaknesses:** Must add bulk; will have some trouble holding up at the point of attack against big NFL offensive linemen. Does not consistently attack blockers. Shows no real pass-rush moves beyond the bull rush. Loses focus on technique, getting upright too often.

**Bottom line:** Guion projects as a third-round pick but could have become a high first-round selection



In 2009 had he stayed at Florida State and shown more consistency. He has the frame to add 15 to 20 pounds of bulk without much trouble. Guion has the tools to be a productive NFL starter, but he will need time to add weight and refine his technique.

## 8 LIONEL DOTSON

► ARIZONA

6-3 $\frac{1}{2}$	289	4.90	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 6.3</b>
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NFL comparison: Jovan Haye, Buccaneers

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete who consistently disrupts plays. Plays with good leverage. Maintains good balance to beat cut blocks, and then accelerates quickly to track down ballcarriers on inside running plays away. Shows the speed to make plays outside. Flashes the ability to beat pass blockers with his quick footwork.

**Weaknesses:** On film, he looks shorter than his measured size. Lacks long arms, hindering his ability to get his hands on offensive linemen first to control the action. If initially slowed by a blocker, he tends to lose leverage and does not fight once stopped. Lacks explosiveness to shoot the gaps and blow up plays in the backfield.

**Bottom line:** Dotson does not make jaw-dropping plays but is a strong, productive two-gap prospect. He is unlikely to be drafted as high as he's rated here, but in time will prove to be a better NFL player than many of the defensive tackles who are drafted ahead of him.

## 9 DEMARIO PRESSLEY

► N.C. STATE

6-3 $\frac{1}{4}$	300	5.15	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 6.0</b>
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NFL comparison: Damione Lewis, Panthers

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, speed and explosive closing burst to chase down plays all over the field. Shows good instincts. Gets off the snap in a blink. Flashes the explosiveness to shoot the gaps and blow up plays in the backfield.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent. Too often plays too upright, becoming a non-factor. Blockers lock up on him easily. Does not always explode off the snap or use his hands aggressively.

**Bottom line:** Pressley entered last season regarded as a premier prospect, but struggled to produce. He must learn to play with technique and intensity on every snap. Even though he's a rare prospect with the tools to play in any defensive scheme, NFL teams should be leery of using a high pick on an inconsistent player.

## 4TH ROUND

### 10 BARRY BOOKER

► VIRGINIA TECH

6-4 $\frac{1}{2}$	278	5.13	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 5.9</b>
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**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, athleticism and competitiveness to consistently disrupt plays. Shows the speed to chase down running backs. Is quick enough to shoot the gap and blow up plays in the backfield. Beats one-on-one pass blocks with quickness and agility.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the ideal bulk to hold up against NFL offensive linemen, hindering his ability to hold his ground at the point of attack; can be driven off the ball too easily. Once an offensive lineman gets hold of him, he struggles to shed in time to make the tackle.

**Bottom line:** Booker is one of the Hokies' lesser-known prospects, but will eventually emerge as one of the better ones. He will be drafted lower than he's rated here (if drafted at all), but in time, he'll develop into a solid NFL starter. Booker fits best as an "under" tackle in a 4-3 scheme.

### 11 RED BRYANT

► TEXAS A&M

6-4 $\frac{1}{4}$	326	5.20	<b>Z FINAL GRADE 5.9</b>
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**Strengths:** Is massive with rare athleticism. Uses his long arms to jolt offensive linemen and drive them back into the quarterback. Locks out blockers in the running game, holding his ground at the point of attack. Sheds blockers to make tackles on runs.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosiveness to shoot gaps and blows up plays in the backfield. Shows no variety of pass-rush moves beyond bull rush.

Tends to play upright, hindering his ability to shed blockers. Does not sense side blocks coming, and gets driven down the line too easily.

**Bottom line:** Bryant is tough to evaluate. He has traits that cannot be taught, but too often is a non-factor. Bryant is an impressive physical specimen who dominates when aggressive.

## 12 FRANK OKAM

> TEXAS

6-4 1/8 336 4.90 FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Has rare size, strength and athleticism. Can be a force at the point of attack when playing with good leverage and hand usage. Jolts offensive linemen upright, sheds blocks and makes the play. Has the elite speed to chase down plays near the sideline. Is a solid tackler. Collapses the pocket when bull-rushing aggressively.

**Weaknesses:** Does not compete with intensity every snap. More often than not, pops upright at the snap and gets pushed around. Tends to play upright and straight-legged, limiting his ability to move through traffic. Is basically an underachiever.

**Bottom line:** Okam is a man-child who had a tremendous sophomore season but was not nearly as productive in 2006 or '07. While many scouts have written him off because of his lackluster effort, it's tough to find defensive tackles with Okam's rare size and athleticism. He is worth a fourth- or fifth-round gamble if his motivation increases.

## 13 KENTWAN BALMER

> NORTH CAROLINA

6-4 1/2 308 4.86

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete. When aggressive, he makes plays against the run and pass. Has long arms and natural strength. Shows good quickness at the snap, and jolts and drives offensive linemen backward when bull-rushing aggressively. When playing with good leverage and hand usage, he stacks up blockers at the point of attack.

**Weaknesses:** Rarely plays to his talent level. Does not play with intensity on every snap. Too often pops upright at the snap and gets pushed around. Does not sense side blocks. Even when close to the ball, he rarely finishes the play.

**Bottom line:** Balmer is a good athlete with the size and strength to be a difference-maker. However, his production is not nearly as good as his potential. He almost certainly will be drafted higher than he's rated here, but Balmer may be a classic underachiever who will struggle to produce in the NFL.

## 5TH ROUND

### 14 DRE MOORE

> MARYLAND

6-4 1/8 307 5.10

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is massive. Shows the strength to be dominant. Occupies two gaps when playing with good leverage and competitiveness. When bull rushing, jolts offensive linemen and drives them into the quarterback. Clogs gaps and shuts down the interior running game.

**Weaknesses:** Does not always work hard, making him much less productive than he should be. Does not use his hands aggressively, and gets tied up too easily. Lacks the explosiveness to shoot the gaps as a pass rusher and has few pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** Moore will cause headaches in NFL

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

Sedrick Ellis > USC

After a great week at the Senior Bowl, Ellis created some discussion over whether he's better than Glenn Dorsey.

### ON THE DECLINE

Frank Okam > Texas

After a disappointing senior season, Okam needed a good week at the East-West Shrine Game, but he struggled and turned off some NFL teams in the process.

### SLEEPER

Marcus Harrison > Arkansas

Harrison has not received a ton of publicity, but film evaluation shows him as a talent who could start early in his career.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

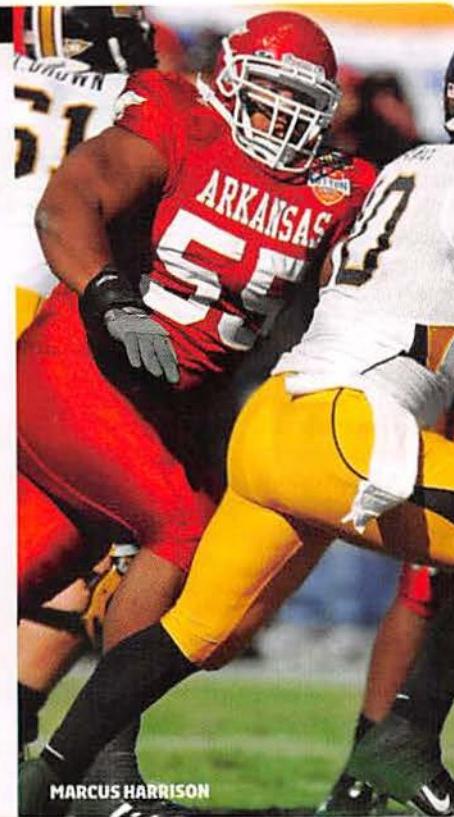
Kentwan Balmer > North Carolina

Balmer has first-round athleticism and size, but doesn't play with passion or intensity. He tends to disappear for long stretches.

### BIGGEST RISK

Dre Moore > Maryland

Despite his all-around skills, taking Moore in Round 1 or 2 is a major concern, because his on-field play at Maryland didn't show his real athleticism and strength level.



MARCUS HARRISON

teams' draft meetings, as he wasn't productive at Maryland but possesses solid credentials. He has the potential to be a dominant two-gap defensive tackle in a 4-3 scheme or a nose tackle in a 3-4 defense, but must learn to play with more intensity.

## 15 HENRY SMITH

> TEXAS A&M

6-2 1/2 307 5.25

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Has the size and strength to play in a two-gap scheme. Is a good athlete with surprising quickness and speed. Shows the strength to clog running lanes at the point of attack when playing with good leverage and using his hands aggressively. Flashes the ability to shed blocks and make tackles on running plays at him.

**Weaknesses:** Did not become a starter until his senior season. Must get in better shape. Tends to get upright, causing him to struggle. Lacks the explosiveness to blow up plays in the backfield.

**Bottom line:** Smith is not as well known as former Aggie linemate Red Bryant, but he has often been more productive. When using good technique, Smith is a good two-gap defensive tackle.

## 16 TERAZ McCRAY

> MIAMI (FLA.)

6-1 287 4.95

Z

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is consistently the first defensive linemen moving at the snap. Shoots gaps to disrupt plays in the backfield. Leaps over cut blocks and moves through traffic quickly. Shows the speed to chase down plays. Flashes the ability to close fast and make hard hits. Hustles to the whistle.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to shed blocks and gets jolted and driven off the line. Does not use his hands well to defeat pass blocks and struggles to pressure the quarterback if initial burst fails. Is around the ball a lot but does not make as many plays as he should. **Bottom line:** McCray disrupts a lot of plays, even

if he doesn't always make the tackle. He will likely slide to the late rounds because of his lack of size, but has the tools to become a good NFL starter. McCray fits best as an "under" tackle who plays alongside a nose tackle in 4-3 scheme.

## 6TH ROUND

### 17 CARLTON POWELL

> VIRGINIA TECH

6-2 1/2 300 5.09

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is quick and athletic. Consistently gets off the snap fast and flashes the ability to be a disruptive force. Gets on top of offensive linemen quickly to jolt them upright and clog holes. Shows quick hands and feet to defeat blockers with arm-over or spin moves.

**Weaknesses:** Does not consistently play with his knees bent or leverage. When popping upright at the snap, he loses leverage and struggles to shed blocks. When playing upright, he cannot pressure the quarterback. Does not use his hands well to protect legs from cut blocks.

**Bottom line:** Powell has the size and strength NFL teams covet, but he does not consistently play up to his talent. Teams should be wary of overrating him. Powell has the talent to become a quality NFL starter but most likely will be nothing more than a backup.

## 7TH ROUND

### 18 NICK HAYDEN

> WISCONSIN

6-4 295 5.10

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is tough and plays with rare intensity. Shows quickness and anticipation to get off the snap and on top of offensive linemen quickly. Fights to the whistle. Pressures the quarterback through sheer

effort. Shows good speed to chase down running backs outside.

**Weaknesses:** Is a stiff and limited athlete. Lacks the flexibility to play with good leverage and change directions on the move. Is undersized; will struggle to hold his ground at the point of attack in the NFL. Lacks explosiveness to shoot gaps. Struggles to deal with side blocks.

**Bottom line:** Hayden is a hard-nosed defensive tackle who was viewed primarily as a free-agent prospect before an excellent week at the East-West Shrine Game. He should carve out a long career because of his great intangibles and ability to make plays as part of a line rotation.

## 19 TREVOR LAWS

► NOTRE DAME

6-0½ 297 5.20

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is athletic with rare quickness. Gets off the snap quickly to hit offensive linemen. Flashes a quick spin move to defeat pass blockers. Never stops hustling. Plays strong at the point of attack when playing with leverage and using his hands well. Chases down running plays away from him between the tackles.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height. Should make many more plays than he does. Has a bad habit of getting upright at the snap, hindering his ability to get leverage to maximize natural strength. Gets driven back too easily. Lacks secondary pass-rush moves. Does not protect legs from cut blocks.

**Bottom line:** Laws grabbed scouts' attention with a strong week at the Senior Bowl. He will likely be drafted late because of his athleticism, but short, inconsistent defensive tackles rarely develop into NFL starters. Laws projects as a good backup and is best suited for a 4-3 defense.

## 20 GEORGE CHUKWU

► RICE

6-0½ 306 5.05

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Shows good size and coordination. Is athletic and versatile; can play tackle or defensive end. Finds the ball and chases it down. Shows some quickness to get upfield as a pass rusher off the edge or drop into coverage in a zone-blitz scheme. Gets off the ground quickly after cut blocks.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit stiff turning and running. Must get stronger. Has trouble beating double teams. At the snap, he tends to stand straight up and lose leverage. Doesn't use his hands well as a pass rusher.

**Bottom line:** Chukwu is raw but athletic, even playing middle linebacker in a few games. While worth a seventh-round flier, he might need a couple years of development before contributing in the NFL.

## 21 JASON SHIRLEY

► FRESNO STATE

6-5 335 4.95

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Has a massive frame; is agile and athletic. Can control the line of scrimmage and plays well in the one-gap system. Makes plays near the sideline; gets upfield in a hurry. Does a decent job pressing the pocket.

**Weaknesses:** Shows a lackadaisical attitude and work ethic. Does not always play hard and too often gets dominated by lesser opponents. Shows questionable conditioning. Has to be rotated out of action too often. Shows poor play-recognition skills.

**Bottom line:** Shirley looks like an elite prospect but lacks the desire to actually become one. He is a big

## IN PROFILE

### GLENN DORSEY

LSU

It's not that often that the player regarded in August as a potential No. 1 overall pick in the NFL Draft is still viewed that way come spring.

Some players get hurt or perform poorly in their final season. Then there's the inevitable influx of juniors who declare for the draft in January. Sometimes, players fall victim to the flavor-of-the-month syndrome, with scouts turning their attention to a late bloomer.

But as Glenn Dorsey prepared for the NFL scouting combine, he was still regarded as a leading contender to hear his name called first on draft day. It's only fair, since some thought the dominating defensive tackle from LSU could have exited the green room early in last year's draft.

Dorsey's decision to return to Baton Rouge looked questionable as he endured a sore hamstring, right-knee sprain and sore back as a senior, causing him to miss practices and play at less than 100 percent much of the season.

Still, he recorded a career-high seven sacks and led LSU to a national championship. Dorsey also collected virtually every postseason award for which he was eligible, including the Nagurski Award, Lombardi Award, Lott Award and Outland Trophy.

To look at the 6-1, 312-pound Dorsey, it's hard to believe he has a few things in common with the main character of 1994's hit movie, *Forrest Gump*. The fictitious Gump wore braces on his legs growing up in a small Southern town before becoming an SEC football star at Alabama. Dorsey grew up in Gonzales, La. (population 9,000), and wore metal braces for a little more than a year as a kid to correct bowed legs.

Then, as now, Dorsey was motivated to overcome physical ailments and make up for lost time.

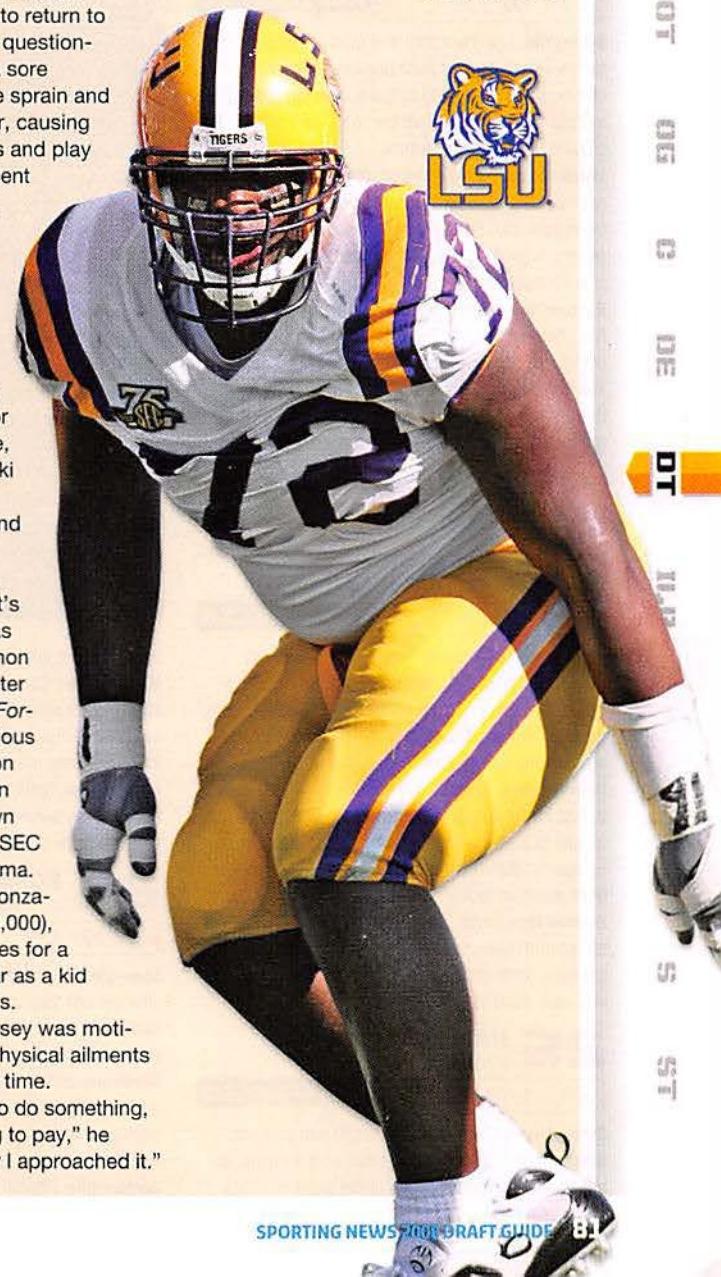
"Once I was able to do something, somebody was going to pay," he says. "That's the way I approached it."

Dorsey's name frequently surfaces as the projected No. 1 pick, along with Virginia defensive end Chris Long. Should the Dolphins keep the top overall choice, it seems unlikely Dorsey would go to Miami, especially as Bill Parcells, the new executive vice president of football operations, will presumably install a 3-4 defense.

Then again, Dorsey might be tough to pass up. After playing through nagging injuries last season, Dorsey has NFL scouts wondering what he might do as a healthy rookie. Dorsey can't wait to find out, having endured the frustration of last year's ailments.

"It was tough," he says. "I was in a lot of pain. And I wasn't always able to do the things I know I'm capable of. That was the biggest thing. My body was hurting. You can deal with the pain, but the mental aspect of not being able to do what I was capable of was just killing me."

—Pete Williams



question mark. However, an NFL team will likely take a chance on him.

## 22 KEILEN DYKES

> WEST VIRGINIA

6-3 1/2 292 5.15 FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete for such a big man. Flashes the ability to jolt offensive linemen with a hard hand punch; sheds them at the point of attack and makes tackles. Fights to the whistle. Is smart; lines up at nose tackle, defensive tackle or end, and always carries out his assignments.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the explosive first step to shoot the gaps or drive offensive linemen back into the pocket. Is not much of a pass rusher, getting upright too often and lacking a variety of pass-rush moves. Struggles to move through traffic. Lacks the quickness and speed to chase down ballcarriers. **Bottom line:** Dykes is a difficult player to grade. He has good size, long arms and natural strength but does not disrupt many plays. He could play defensive tackle in a two-gap, 4-3 scheme, but may fit best at end in a 3-4 defense.

## 23 YANIV BARNETT

> ARIZONA

6-2 1/2 322 5.20 FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Has the agility and quick hands and feet to defeat one-on-one pass blocks. Shows a good closing burst to the quarterback. Has the strength to hold his ground against the run. Can stack up the blocker at the point of attack.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent; doesn't play as aggressively or make nearly as many plays as he should. Can be jolted by the initial block when playing high and driven off the ball. Doesn't sense side blocks coming.

**Bottom line:** Barnett has the talent to stick in the NFL, but is often blocked too easily because of his lack of urgency and tendency to play upright. Teams should be wary of using a draft pick on Barnett due to his inconsistencies. If his potential is realized, he could develop into a solid NFL backup.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

## 24 BLAKE SMITH

> COLORADO STATE

6-2 1/2 256 4.95 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is consistent. Shows great pass-rush skills. Is quick off the snap and does a nice job pressuring the passer. Uses his hands well to rip and duck through blockers. Shows good balance and footwork. Is smart and shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Is small and built more like an end, but lacks the speed to play outside. Must add a lot of bulk to play inside in the NFL. Struggles to hold up against the run and can be blocked by one man. Must improve tackling skills.

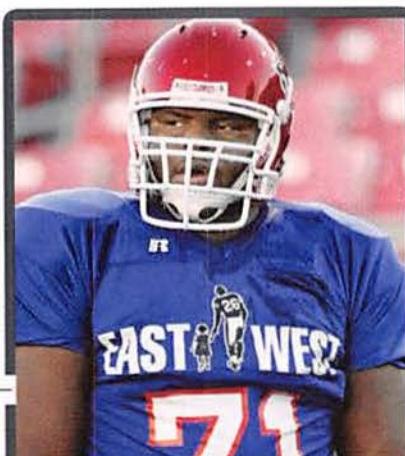
**Bottom line:** Smith is somewhat of a defensive tackle/end 'tweener, but always seems to make the big play. Smith projects as a special teams warrior and pass-rush specialist.

## 25 NATE ROBINSON

> AKRON

6-3 1/4 305 5.15 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows natural strength and a strong hand punch to jolt offensive linemen backward. Is big and can hold his ground at the point of attack



## SKILL SET

### BEST PASS RUSHER

Glenn Dorsey > LSU

Dorsey is explosive off the ball, has quick hands and feet and consistently shoots through gaps to get into the backfield and pressure the quarterback.

### BEST RUN STOPPER

Ahtyba Rubin > Iowa State

Rubin is a massive tackle with the playing strength to dominate at the point of attack. Even when failing to make the tackle, he consistently clogs up the middle and shuts down the inside run.

### BIGGEST HITTER

Pat Sims > Auburn

Sims does a very good job of exploding up into the ballcarrier or quarterback, making hard tackles. He consistently shows an aggressive closing burst to the ball.

### BEST IN PURSUIT

Sedrick Ellis > USC

Ellis has elite foot quickness and playing speed. His instincts help him to identify the play quickly, and he has the playing speed to track down runners with ease.

### HOT FREE AGENT

Blake Smith > Colorado State

Smith is undersized, having played at around 255 pounds in college, but could become a productive starter if he's able to bulk up.

when playing with good pad level.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks instincts, competitiveness and lateral quickness. Is a marginal tackler who does not finish plays. Lacks quickness with his hands and feet. Does not always play hard.

**Bottom line:** Robinson has the size to be a 3-4 nose tackle, but rarely works hard and doesn't deserve to be drafted.

## 26 ROPATI PITOITUA

> WASHINGTON STATE

6-8 289 5.35 FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Possesses the frame to add weight, get stronger and take up a lot of space. Has the height to easily take away passing lanes and uses long arms to reach out and make tackles on plays away from him.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit thin and struggles to gain leverage and collapse the pocket. Lacks good pass-rush technique and rarely makes plays in the backfield. Has had trouble staying healthy.

**Bottom line:** Pitoitua is a mountain of a man. In

college, though, he was not able to stay healthy or show any burst. His size and strength will get him an NFL training camp invite, but he faces a steep uphill battle to make a roster.

## 27 JAMES McCLINTON

> KANSAS

6-0 285 4.95

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Works hard on every snap. Is smart. Shows good quickness off the snap and finds the ball quickly. Displays good body balance and control to change directions. Makes plays down the line because of hustle.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks size, bulk and strength. Once locked up, he doesn't have the power to hold his ground at the point of attack. Lacks the arm length to shed blocks with force.

**Bottom line:** McClinton lacks the size, speed, power and strength to play in the NFL. He is nothing more than a training camp body.

## 28 VERNON BRYANT

> HAMPTON

6-2 1/2 286 4.98

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Shows good athleticism, quickness and speed. Gets off the snap quickly. Shows good change-of-direction and short-area burst. Closes on the ballcarrier in tight spaces to deliver hard hits. Works hard and hustles to make plays downfield.

**Weaknesses:** Is raw. Turns his shoulder into blocks and rarely uses his hands. Lacks the strength to shed blocks with force. Does not use his hands when rushing the passer.

**Bottom line:** Bryant is a natural athlete with good speed, but isn't a good football player. He flashes good playmaking ability because of his natural quickness and speed, but he disappears far too often.

## 29 DEREK LOKEY

> TEXAS

6-2 290 5.25

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Is strong, tough and competitive. Bench-presses 500-plus pounds. Shows good instincts to sniff out plays quickly. Drives offensive linemen backward with bull rush to pressure the quarterback.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete, lacking the explosiveness and speed to make impact plays. Is stiff and struggles to move through traffic. Gets cut to the ground easily. Struggles to shed blockers; gets tied up and ballcarriers get past him.

**Bottom line:** Lokey is the type of defensive tackle who is often overlooked because of his lack of athleticism, but he could be a solid backup because of his excellent intangibles.

## 30 CARLOS FELICIANO

> MARYLAND

6-4 307 5.40

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive, playing with energy and passion. Chases down ballcarriers through hustle and effort. Shows quick and active hands, and is strong enough to jolt offensive linemen and rip through their blocks when he stays low.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete who lacks the explosiveness and quickness to be an impact pass rusher. Is an overachiever who doesn't make impact plays. Struggles to protect his legs from cut blocks.

**Bottom line:** Feliciano is a classic overachiever. However, he has rare intangibles and is productive. He's worth a look as an undrafted free agent.

**A-**

**A**s opposed to the 2007 draft when Mississippi's Patrick Willis was the only inside linebacker taken in the first round, three prospects have a good chance of going in Round 1 this year, and four more should be gone by the end of the first day. Our War Room scouts have determined UNLV's Beau Bell is leading the way.

Bell was highly productive at UNLV and has the best combination of production, size and speed of all the inside linebacker prospects. He plays with the intensity and passion NFL teams covet, and has consistently shown the ability to make hard tackles. The only concern is that he occasionally looks lost and does not move toward the ball quickly enough.

The strength of this position was enhanced when Oklahoma's Curtis Lofton and Tennessee's Jerod Mayo chose to enter the draft early. Lofton is a short and thick-bodied linebacker in uniform, but plays quicker and faster than he looks. While Mayo is not as thick as Lofton, he is extremely active and flies all over the field. Both players have great instincts.

Virginia Tech's Vince Hall is this year's prime example and test case of a solid college football player who lacks the height, weight and speed combination that NFL teams are so desperate for. Despite being the most productive of this year's prospects, he is likely to slide down in the draft due to his size and unimpressive 40 time (4.9). However, look for Hall to prove himself on the field and become a good starting linebacker.

Georgia Tech's Philip Wheeler and Tavares Gooden of Miami (Fla.) are slightly undersized but very productive prospects.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL optimum	6-3	250	4.55
NFL minimum	5-10	235	4.90

Inside linebackers in a 3-4 and the middle linebacker in a 4-3 share a primary responsibility: stopping the run between the tackles. That requires the size and strength to shed blocks and the athletic ability to slip them. Some inside linebackers are replaced on passing downs by players with better cover skills, but the trend has shifted to every-down linebackers who have the athletic ability and speed to stay on the field.

## 2007 DRAFT

INSIDE LINEBACKERS TAKEN: 16

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	2	2	4	1	0	2	5

**Bell rings true as a star prospect, but Lofton and Mayo aren't far behind**



BEAU BELL

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 BEAU BELL UNLV

6-1 1/2	243	4.51	FINAL GRADE	8.0
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT	
2004	16	10	0.0	0
2005	50	42	3.5	0
2006	41	35	4.0	0
2007	79	47	3.0	4

**NFL comparison:** Nick Barnett, Packers

**Against the inside run:** Is powerful and plays compact inside. Coils and explodes on blockers and ballcarriers inside the tackle box. Can snap the head of the blocker, lock out and shed with force. Plays with strong hands and can control blockers. Attacks lead blockers with force. Is a strong wrap-up tackler; shows the knee bend to get under the pads of runners and make plays. Knows when to scrape and slip blocks. **Grade: 8.0**

**Against the outside run:** Has great speed. Is quick to read and react. Plays laterally with a burst. Closes with another gear to make plays in the open field. Uses his hands well to shed cut blocks, easily moving through traffic. Makes plays sideline-to-sideline. Is smart to slip blocks and has the speed to backdoor blocks and still make plays outside. **Grade: 8.5**

**Blitz/coverage:** Is a straight-line blitzer with few pass-rush moves. Tries to use power to blow through blockers, especially running backs. Gets sacks because of effort and speed. Is solid in coverage. Has the speed to recover from his mistakes. Shows good awareness, and understands responsibilities. Gets too upright in backpedal; takes an extra step out of transition to compensate. **Grade: 6.5**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows good intelligence and is quick to read and react to passes or runs. Bites on hard play-action fakes but has the speed to recover. Always seems to be around the ball. **Grade: 6.5**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Goes all out, all the time. Effort is infectious and makes many plays on sheer will. Shows outstanding range. Can snap his hips to blow up ballcarriers. Puts full force into tackles to shock ballcarriers. Shows the quick footwork to make plays in the open field. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Bell is a tackling machine who is always looking to punish ballcarriers. He shows an internal rage that is infectious. Bell is not a perfect prospect, but his size, strength, speed, toughness and competitiveness will make him a first-round pick.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How INSIDE LINEBACKERS are graded:** Against inside run: Steps up and fills the hole, physical, takes on blockers. Against outside run: Wards off blocks, gets to sideline, pursuit. Blitz/pass rush: Power or finesse, use of hands, feet. Key and diagnose: Reads and reacts, gets jump on the ball. Lateral pursuit: Gets over trash, hips, sideline chase. Tackling: Wraps up, physical, drags down, solid. Pass drop: Hips and turns, depth, zone coverage. Pass coverage/hands: Man coverage, hips and turns.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 2ND ROUND

### 2 CURTIS LOFTON\*

> OKLAHOMA

6-0	245	4.75	FINAL GRADE	<b>7.3</b>
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT	
2005	3	0.0	0	
2006	20	17	0.0	0
2007	94	63	1.0	3

NFL comparison: Lofa Tatupu, Seahawks

Against the inside run: Shows the instincts to attack on inside running plays. Has the strength to stand up lead blockers when filling holes aggressively. Stays free and makes tackles on inside running plays. **Grade: 8.5**

Against the outside run: Consistently reads and reacts to plays quickly, compensating for lack of quick-twitch athleticism. Once at full speed, he consistently tracks down plays in pursuit. Plays faster than his 40 time suggests. **Grade: 7.0**

Blitz/coverage: Is surprisingly effective dropping into zone coverage. Reads quarterbacks quickly and shows a closing burst to play the ball. Has a knack of breaking up passes. Allows good separation out of cuts and lacks the burst to recover. **Grade: 7.0**

Run/pass recognition: Is smart and instinctive. Makes more plays than expected because of his ability to read and react to plays quickly. Never gets fooled by play-action fakes or misdirection plays. Always carries out his assignment. **Grade: 8.0**

Pursuit/tackling: Lacks elite range but shows the instincts to start toward the ball quickly. Once at full speed, he shows a closing burst to finish plays. Is a good tackler who consistently delivers hard hits. Doesn't miss tackles in open field. **Grade: 7.5**

Bottom line: Lofton would not have helped his draft stock by staying at Oklahoma for his final season. He is a polished football player who projects as a productive starting middle linebacker in a 4-3 scheme or inside linebacker in a 3-4 defense.

### 3 JEROD MAYO\*

> TENNESSEE

6-2	230	4.65	FINAL GRADE	<b>7.2</b>
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT	
2005	10	3	0.0	0
2006	48	35	5.0	0
2007	79	61	1.5	1

NFL comparison: Will Witherspoon, Rams

Against the inside run: Shows great instincts and quick footwork. Stays active; shows the agility and quickness to move well in tight quarters. Has a good burst to ballcarriers. **Grade: 8.0**

Against the outside run: Is better than expected at chasing down plays outside the tackles. Lacks the elite speed to catch fast ballcarriers before they turn the corner, but he plays faster than timed speed would suggest. Easily avoids blockers in the open field. **Grade: 7.0**

Blitz/coverage: Is quick and smooth dropping into coverage. Reads quarterbacks well and shows a quick closing burst to break up passes. Shows the athleticism and speed to stay with tight ends. **Grade: 7.0**

Run/pass recognition: Is smart and instinctive; consistently reads and reacts to plays quickly. Doesn't get fooled by play-action fakes and misdirection plays. Stays under control and tackles well in the open field. **Grade: 7.5**

Pursuit/tackling: Consistently finishes plays with hard, physical tackles. Is productive in backside

pursuit. Gets started toward the ball quickly. Reaches full speed in a hurry and easily moves through traffic to chase down plays. **Grade: 7.0**

Bottom line: Mayo could have improved his stock a bit if he had returned for his final season, but still made a solid choice to enter the 2008 draft. He should be productive in either a 4-3 or 3-4 defense.

### 4 VINCE HALL

> VIRGINIA TECH

5-11 <sup>3/4</sup>	237	5.00	FINAL GRADE	<b>7.0</b>
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT	
2004	21	43	1.0	0
2005	43	69	3.0	2
2006	61	67	2.0	0
2007	37	63	3.5	1

NFL comparison: Zach Thomas, Free agent

Against the inside run: Aggressively fills holes, sometimes so fast that he blows up plays in the backfield. Shows quick footwork, and his good hands help to avoid blockers. Displays an explosive closing burst. **Grade: 8.0**

Against the outside run: Sifts through traffic easily and shows the speed to chase down plays sideline-to-sideline. Maintains good balance to adjust and make open-field tackles. Does not get fooled. Has the speed to cut behind blockers and chase down ballcarriers. **Grade: 6.5**

Blitz/coverage: Times blitzes well and bursts through the line of scrimmage to pressure quarterbacks. Gets good depth in coverage drops, reads quarterbacks well and breaks and closes in time to deliver hard hits after the catch. Shows the athleticism and speed to cover running backs or tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Must improve at picking up receivers off the line. Shows inconsistent hands. **Grade: 7.0**

Run/pass recognition: Is smart. Shows good instincts and consistently identifies plays. Doesn't get fooled by trick or misdirection plays. Can chase down plays most at his position can't. **Grade: 8.0**

Pursuit/tackling: Shows the range and closing burst to finish plays. Bends his knees well and

stays under control to break down and make open-field tackles. Runs through tackles, consistently delivering hard hits while missing few. **Grade: 7.0**

Bottom line: Hall won't be drafted as highly as his on-field production warrants because of his poor measurable skills. He fits best playing the middle in a 4-3 scheme or a 3-4 speed defense.

### 5 PHILIP WHEELER

> GEORGIA TECH

6-2	245	4.55	FINAL GRADE	<b>7.0</b>
TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT	
2003	4	2	0.0	0
2005	36	28	4.0	4
2006	52	37	9.0	0
2007	46	42	5.5	0

NFL comparison: Keith Bulluck, Titans

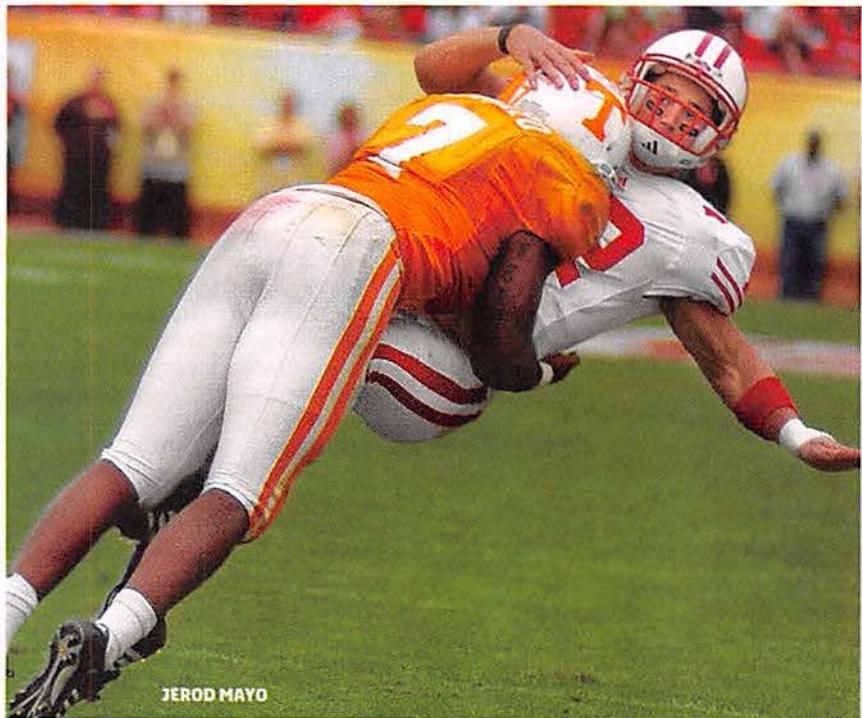
Against the inside run: Slides and moves well to avoid blocks in traffic. Fills holes quickly. Takes on lead blockers at the point of attack to blow up plays in the hole. Lacks ideal size to take on and shed blocks from offensive linemen. **Grade: 6.0**

Against the outside run: With a clear path to the ball, he has the speed to chase down plays but lacks the elite speed to consistently make tackles along the sideline. Closes well to finish plays. In pursuit, he tends to get a little upright and thus overruns some tackles. **Grade: 7.0**

Blitz/coverage: Isn't an explosive off-the-snap blitzer, but he times blitzes well to get through the line cleanly. Shows a good closing burst. Is quick and smooth dropping into zone coverage. Reads quarterbacks well and closes quickly to break up passes, but he must improve his hands to make interceptions. **Grade: 7.5**

Run/pass recognition: Is smart and instinctive. Reads dump-off passes and works hard to make hits immediately after the catch. Doesn't get fooled by play-action fakes or misdirection. **Grade: 8.0**

Pursuit/tackling: Reaches full speed quickly. Shows the flexibility and athleticism to make open-field tackles, but he sometimes gets out of control and lunges at ballcarriers. **Grade: 7.5**



TOMASSO DEROSA

**Bottom line:** Wheeler, who played inside and outside linebacker in college, is impressive because he is productive in all facets of defense. He will be a solid NFL starter who fits best as a middle linebacker in a Tampa-2 scheme.

## 3RD ROUND

### 6 EZRA BUTLER

> NEVADA

6-2 251 4.48

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Edgerton Hartwell, Bengals

**Strengths:** Is smart and incredibly fast. Has an incredible closing burst. Is a powerful tackler who explodes on ballcarriers. Plays with good discipline. Is tough and competitive. Shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Was injured often during his senior season. Spends too much time dealing with blockers. Loses coverage responsibilities because he gets caught peeking into the backfield or tries to do too much to help his teammates.

**Bottom line:** Butler fits into any defensive scheme. He performed better as a junior than as a senior, but still warrants a high draft grade. With such elite athleticism, Butler could move into the second round.

### 7 TAVARES GOODEN

> MIAMI (FLA.)

6-11<sup>b</sup> 233 4.55

FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** Nate Webster, Broncos

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete who flies around the field making plays against the run and pass. Shows the acceleration and speed to chase down ballcarriers. Is quick and smooth dropping into zone coverage, reading quarterbacks well and closing quickly to break up passes. Is alert picking up running backs and tight ends in man-to-man coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Looks small on film. Lacks the bulk to hold his ground at the point of attack against offensive linemen. Doesn't have the elite speed to chase down or cover the fastest NFL players.

**Bottom line:** Some view Gooden at outside linebacker, however, his real value is in the middle. His speed and coverage ability make him a real asset in today's game, where NFL teams require middle linebackers to get down the field in deep coverage. Gooden should start early in his pro career.

## 4TH ROUND

### 8 JAMEEL McCCLAIN

> SYRACUSE

6-1 245 4.80

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Is productive at a variety of positions. Carries out assignments and does not make mental errors. Shows quick hands and feet to defeat pass blockers. Is smooth and fluid dropping into zone coverage. Reads and reacts to the quarterback well and closes quickly to make hard hits.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't have the explosiveness to be a consistent pass-rush threat. Lacks speed and experience at linebacker. Must learn to use his hands better. Lacks pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** McClain hardly played before his junior season, when he moved to defensive end and was productive. However, he'll have to play linebacker in the NFL. McClain will be highly valued by teams that regard versatility as a top trait.

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

**Jolonn Dunbar** > Boston College

His play at the East-West Shrine Game opened scouts' eyes and moved him from a likely undrafted free agent to a fourth- or fifth-round possibility.

### ON THE DECLINE

**Vince Hall** > Virginia Tech

While his on-field play was excellent, he has a slow 40 time. Hall's lack of size and elite speed has knocked him down teams' draft boards.

### SLEEPER

**Spencer Larsen** > Arizona

Larsen does not fit the ideal mold of an outside linebacker and will slip to the late rounds in the draft. However, he fits the profile of an overachiever who makes it in the NFL.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

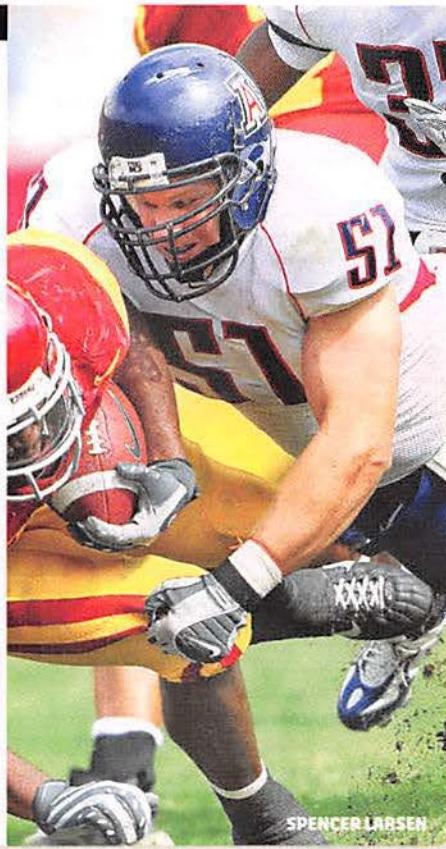
**Rodrick Johnson** > Oklahoma State

Johnson is a big, strong middle linebacker with natural athletic ability, but does not play with intensity and passion on every snap.

### BIGGEST RISK

**Beau Bell** > UNLV

Teams will have to use a first-round pick on Bell, and concerns revolve around his ability to handle the complexities and constant adjustments of the NFL.



SPENCER LARSEN

## 5TH ROUND

### 9 LAMAR MYLES\*

> LOUISVILLE

6-0 220 4.70

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quick footwork, agility and body control to make form tackles in the open field. Shows surprising strength when tackling. Uses his hands well to keep blockers away and has sneaky strength at the point of attack. Is smooth and fluid dropping into zone coverage and closes quickly to make hard hits.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't have the elite explosiveness to make plays outside of the tackle box. Consistently bites on play-action fakes. Keeps his eyes on the backfield too long; often loses contact with his man.

**Bottom line:** Myles should have stayed in school to add bulk. He must also improve his technique against the pass and run. Myles projects as a backup and special teams contributor until he gets bigger and more polished.

### 10 COREY MCKEON

> NEBRASKA

6-0 3<sup>b</sup> 235 4.70

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Shows good intelligence and instincts; makes more plays than expected. When focused and under control, he maintains good balance and is a sound open-field tackler. Makes tackles in the backfield. Is smooth and fluid dropping into zone coverage and reacts quickly to play the ball. Is tough and never stops hustling.

**Weaknesses:** Is slightly undersized, hindering his ability to hold his ground at the point of attack against lead blockers. Lacks great speed to chase down fast running backs.

**Bottom line:** McKeon is somewhat of an odd fit, because he lacks the great bulk of a traditional middle linebacker and also the elite athleticism of the NFL's shorter middle linebackers used in the Tampa-2. He grades out well on film, though. McKeon will likely be drafted lower than rated here, but, in time, will prove to be a solid starter.

### 11 SPENCER LARSEN

> ARIZONA

6-1 1<sup>b</sup> 235 4.80

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Reads and reacts quickly, playing faster than his timed speed would suggest. Sifts through traffic and uses his hands well to stay free from blocks. Blows up ballcarriers on inside running plays. Times his blitzes well to get through the line and pressure quarterbacks.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the speed, explosiveness and agility to consistently make plays in the open field or in pass coverage. Shows limited range and struggles to make plays outside the offensive tackles.

**Bottom line:** Larsen looks like the classic tough, overachieving college middle linebacker who tends to struggle in the NFL. He must join a traditional 4-3 defense because of his lack of speed.

### 12 JOLONN DUNBAR

> BOSTON COLLEGE

6-0 227 4.82

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Has great experience against top competition. Uses his athleticism and instincts to diagnose plays quickly and fulfill his gap responsibilities. Breaks down nicely to make the tackle in the open field. Is the leader of the defense.

**Weaknesses:** Doesn't have ideal size and elite speed. Lacks an explosive closing burst to finish

plays on blitzes and in pursuit. Will struggle to match up in man-to-man coverage, which could limit his snaps in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Dunbar is relatively new to linebacker, having played running back in high school, but his offensive experience helps him to move well in tight spaces. However, his size will be a distinct disadvantage. Look for him to be a late-round pick who will become a good backup and spot starter.

## 6TH ROUND

### 13 J LEMAN ILLINOIS

6-2 1/4 237 4.90 FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Has prototypical size and instincts. Takes flawless angles to the ball. Uses his hands well to sift through traffic. Shows great strength and technique to fight off blocks. Displays good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Struggles to accelerate and fill holes quickly. Has a hard time getting depth in pass coverage because of his limited upper-body flexibility. Rarely breaks up a pass or makes an interception.

**Bottom line:** Leman, a tackling machine, makes plays all over the field despite his limited speed and athleticism. He is an old-school player who's ideally suited to be an NFL backup. But the lack of

productive inside linebackers in the league could push him into a starting role for a 3-4 defense.

## 7TH ROUND

### 14 RODRICK JOHNSON OKLAHOMA STATE

6-2 260 4.80

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is strong and well built. When aggressive, he is a force at the point of attack. Is a good athlete who gets good depth when dropping into coverage. Can plant, drive and close quickly to make hard hits right after the catch. Is a smart blitzer who consistently attacks blockers.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks a closing burst to consistently finish plays. Too often stops and lunges at ballcarriers to deliver highlight-reel hits, and misses many tackles as a result.

**Bottom line:** Johnson can be a punishing defender when aggressive. He has the talent to be an NFL starter with more consistency. Johnson fits best as an inside linebacker in a physical 3-4 scheme.

### 15 DANTE FLOYD NEW MEXICO STATE

5-11 1/4 236 4.90

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is quick, athletic and tough. Is an aggressive blitzer who attacks the blocker and shows the strength to run him over. Plays bigger

and stronger than his size would suggest.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height. Does not consistently bend his knees and stay under control when tackling in the open field. Is a character risk.

**Bottom line:** Floyd flies under the radar. He is a junior-college transfer who didn't start until last season. Floyd may not be drafted, but has the tools to be a productive backup in a 3-4 scheme.

### 16 JONATHAN GOFF VANDERBILT

6-2 1/4 239 4.85

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is tough, smart and instinctive. Has good strength and takes on blockers with good technique and power. Plays strong at the point of attack. Reads and reacts quickly and fills holes with force. Has long arms and strong hands to shed blocks. Shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles against outside running plays. Will try to slide under blocks and gets cut down easily. Struggles in man-to-man coverage, getting burned out of breaks. Is a straight-line pass rusher with no moves and doesn't use his hands well. Dives too much for tackles.

**Bottom line:** At best, Goff will be a two-down player in the NFL. He is a below-average athlete who plays the game too mechanically. Goff will get drafted in the later rounds because he is smart, fast and tough, but will struggle to be more than a backup.

### 17 STEVE OCTAVIEN NEBRASKA

6-0 250 4.75

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Has the speed to chase down plays sideline-to-sideline. Displays the athleticism and speed to stay with running backs in man-to-man coverage. Flashes a quick closing burst on passes in front of him, delivering a hard hit. Has experience rushing the passer as a blitzer.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent. Lacks instincts to compensate for slow reads. Must greatly improve tackling technique; does not wrap up consistently.

**Bottom line:** Because of injuries and inconsistent play, Octavien has struggled to play to his potential. He has the athleticism to be an NFL starter, but his instincts are lacking. It is uncertain if he'll improve enough to be anything more than a backup.

### 18 MIKE HUMPAL IOWA

6-2 1/4 238 4.69

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is strong and competitive. Stays free; is consistently around the ball on inside running plays. Reads plays quickly and gets started fast to chase down running backs between the tackles.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to move quickly through traffic, limiting range to the outside. Lacks the burst to catch up after losing a step in coverage.

**Bottom line:** Humpal is the classic hard-nosed defender who is consistently productive solely because of his intangibles. Despite his lack of athleticism, he has the size, strength, toughness and instincts to make it as a backup in the NFL, ideally as the No. 3 player in a 3-4 scheme.

### 19 BEN MOFFITT SOUTH FLORIDA

6-1 231 4.85

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive, and he makes more plays than his athleticism should allow. Reads plays and gets started toward the ball quickly.

# SNAPSHOT

## VINCE HALL

**My breakthrough moment as a college player:** My [redshirt] freshman year, our first game of the year against USC. It was, I want to say, third-and-1 or fourth-and-1, and I went heads up with [running back] LenDale White. They didn't end up getting it. I ended up stopping them. So that kind of put me on the map, had my mind set that college is really not as high as [I can go]. Anybody could play on this level.

**My college stats fail to show ... my leadership role out there.** I'm always loud, trying to point out trouble to everybody else, let them know what's going on, making sure we're all on the same page.

**My opponents would say the best thing I do is ...** I'm always going to be around the football. Some way or another, you're going to see No. 9 around that ball.

**The part of my game that will need the most work in the NFL:** If anything, the pass coverage. The passing game is going to step the game up real high. I'd say there's 10 times more passing in the NFL than there was in college. And there's going to be deeper routes for everybody, so I got to make sure I get my pass coverage down.

**My favorite football player of all-time:** [NFL Hall-of-Fame linebacker] Lawrence Taylor. Just the way he was always around the football. He was rushing in, [and] the next thing you know, he would drop back in coverage. You didn't know what he could do. When he came to hit you, though, you felt it.

**The NFL player I can't wait to face:** Anybody, to tell you the truth. I think it's a blessing to be in the NFL in general.

**Five years from now, I will be known as ...** a competitor on the field and a good guy off the field. And a tackling machine, too.

**My advice to players entering college this year:** Stay focused. There's always going to be adversity for you before you get on the field. But make sure when you get on the field and you get your chance to show somebody what you can do out there, it's 100 percent.

—Mike Giglio

Attacks the line aggressively as a blitzer. Shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete. Lacks the flexibility and agility to move and adjust well. Struggles to make open-field tackles. Must greatly improve at handling blockers to make it in the NFL. **Bottom line:** Every team wants a hard worker like Moffitt on its roster, a big reason why he could have a good NFL career despite lacking the requisite athleticism. He is an intriguing late Day 2 prospect who could develop into a solid backup.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 20 JERMAINE DIAS

> VIRGINIA

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Takes on blockers strong at the point of attack, holding his ground and keeping the play inside. Flashes the ability to shed and make the tackle. Competes hard and hustles. Reads plays quickly. Makes more plays than expected.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the quickness and speed to make plays outside and cannot track plays in pursuit. Doesn't have the speed to cover running backs or tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Once there is separation, he lacks the burst to catch up. **Bottom line:** Dias is best suited for a team that plays a strong and physical 3-4 scheme, where he'd have a shot to stick as a backup who is most productive against the run.

### 21 BRANNON CARTER

> NORTHERN IOWA

6-3 219 4.75

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is aggressive, filling holes quickly against the run. Finds the ball quickly against the run and shows a nice closing burst. Moves well through traffic to avoid blocks. Delivers big hits to receivers on crossing routes.

**Weaknesses:** Is an inside/outside linebacker 'tweener who lacks the ideal size to play inside and the speed to be effective outside. Is too aggressive at times and will bite on play-action fakes. Looks uncomfortable dropping into coverage.

**Bottom line:** Carter is productive against inside running plays but struggles to make plays outside the hashmarks or in coverage. He projects as a free-agent signee and solid practice-squad player.

### 22 MATT CASTELO

> SAN JOSE STATE

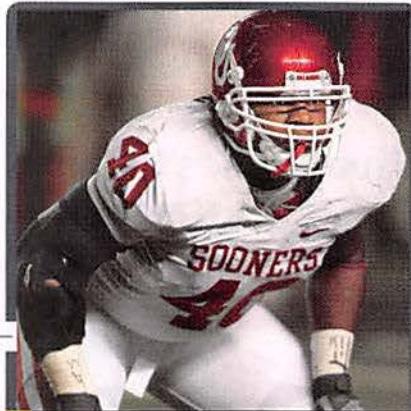
5-10 1/4 230 4.65

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows great instincts. Reads and reacts quickly, accelerating to full speed and chasing down ballcarriers between the tackles. Reads quarterbacks well and closes on passes in front of him to deliver hard hits.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the size and strength to fare well at the point of attack against big blockers. Aggressive play hinders his ability to break down and tackle well in the open field, and he often dives or lunges to make plays.

**Bottom line:** In past years, Castelo's lack of height would have pretty much ended his chances of playing in the NFL. But as more teams seek speedy, athletic linebackers to help in coverage, short linebackers have found a home. The trouble is that Castelo lacks the quickness and explosiveness to overcome his lack of size.



## SKILL SET

### ► BEST IN PASSING GAME

**Philip Wheeler** > Georgia Tech

Wheeler is a very good athlete who does a top-notch job of being productive in zone and man-to-man coverage. He reads the pass well, closes fast and has the skills to consistently make plays on the ball.

### ► BEST AGAINST OUTSIDE RUN

**Beau Bell** > UNLV

Bell has excellent playing speed and has shown the acceleration and explosive closing burst to track plays down from sideline-to-sideline.

### ► BEST AGAINST INSIDE RUN

**Curtis Lofton** > Oklahoma

Lofton is a muscular and well-built linebacker who consistently stacks the point against blockers and makes hard hits on inside running plays.

### ► MOST VERSATILE

**Philip Wheeler** > Georgia Tech

Not many players at this position can easily chase down running backs on outside running plays, make tackles against the inside run and excel in pass coverage like Wheeler.

### ► TOUGHEST

**J Leman** > Illinois

Leman has consistently played through injuries to stay on the field at Illinois while still maintaining a high level of production.

### 23 MISI TUPE

> TEXAS A&M

5-9 1/4 253 4.80

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a well-built linebacker with the strength to tackle big ballcarriers. Shows good instincts to react quickly to plays. Times blitzes well and gets through the line fast.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and struggles to shed blocks because opponents engulf him. Tends to play out of control when tackling. Does not fill holes quickly or take on lead blockers aggressively.

**Bottom line:** Despite his size, Tupe could become a backup linebacker with his combination of bulk, athleticism, instincts and strength. He might also be an ideal candidate for fullback.

### 24 MAURICE CRUM

> NOTRE DAME

6-0 230 4.85

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows good instincts to read and react quickly. Fills holes aggressively. Is quick and alert

in zone coverage, and he closes quickly on passes in front of him, making sound tackles.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal speed, agility and flexibility. Doesn't have the burst to recover once beaten.

**Bottom line:** Crum is the type of linebacker who often gets written off because he isn't flashy, but his intelligence, instincts and production give him a chance to make it in the NFL. He must make his mark on special teams, because he won't play much early.

### 25 MIKE KLINKENBORG

> IOWA

6-1 1/4 238 4.89

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Reads inside runs quickly; fills the hole fast and aggressively blows up the lead blocker and makes the tackle. Is smooth and fluid dropping into coverage. Closes quickly on passes in front of him to make tackles.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Lacks the speed to make plays near the sideline and the burst to play the ball in coverage.

**Bottom line:** Klinkenborg is the classic overachiever who won't be on most NFL teams' draft boards. He projects as a backup who fits best in a 3-4 defense.

### 26 KALEB THORNHILL

> MICHIGAN STATE

6-1 245 4.90

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is tough, physical and smart. Shows good leadership skills. Makes a lot of hustle plays. Reads plays well. Is aggressive, always looking to deliver a big hit. Is a strong wrap-up tackler.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks speed and quickness. Struggles to change directions quickly. Is a straight-line blitzer without any pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** Thornhill is a physical player who is best suited to play inside linebacker in a 3-4 defense. He will receive training camp invites, but must choose the correct system.

### 27 JOEY LAROCQUE

> OREGON STATE

6-1 1/4 228 4.85

FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Consistently makes plays with an all-out effort. Plays faster than his 40 time would suggest. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage and closes quickly to deliver hard hits. Has the hands to make tough interceptions.

**Weaknesses:** Is short, stiff and a limited athlete. Lacks the speed to chase down NFL ballcarriers or cover running backs and tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Struggles to shed blocks on inside runs.

**Bottom line:** LaRocque lacks the ability to be as productive in the NFL as he was in college. However, he has the intangibles to challenge for a spot as a backup and special teams player.

### 28 ALAN DARLIN

> OREGON STATE

6-0 1/4 244 4.90

FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Has good upper-body strength to control blockers and make tackles. Is physical and will hit ballcarriers hard.

**Weaknesses:** Is not athletic. Lacks great instincts to compensate for his lack of speed. Must add weight to absorb NFL pounding.

**Bottom line:** Darlin will struggle to transition to the NFL because of his lack of athleticism. He might have to move to the weak side, but even that will be a challenge.

# OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

RATINGS AND TEXT BY WAR ROOM SCOUTS

2008 CLASS GRADE:

C+

This year's class of outside linebackers has one superstar in USC's Keith Rivers, along with at least 10 players who have legitimate starting potential but also some glaring weaknesses. That's why there are no surefire choices. Even so, at least 12 outside linebackers should be selected by the end of the fourth round.

Some teams will be wary of Rivers because he measured in at 6-1 7/8 at the Senior Bowl, which is shorter than ideal for an outside linebacker. However, his athleticism, production and competitiveness more than compensate for his height. Rivers is going to start early in his career and will be a highly productive three-down linebacker.

One of the more interesting prospects in this year's draft is Auburn's Quentin Groves. His potential and ideal position in the NFL have become a big source of debate among scouts.

Groves has the size, strength and explosiveness that NFL teams covet, but is still adjusting to outside linebacker after playing mostly defensive end in college.

The argument with Colorado's Jordon Dizon revolves around his lack of height, although he is a productive linebacker who flies around the field with great intensity and has the elite speed to consistently chase down the ballcarrier. With so many NFL teams now running Tampa-2 defensive schemes, Dizon has much greater value.

Another athletic linebacker surrounded by size questions is Virginia Tech's Xavier Adibi. His concern is not height, but weight.

Both Dizon and Adibi helped themselves with strong Senior Bowl performances, and are moving up teams' draft boards.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-3	245	4.50
NFL Minimum	5-11	230	4.90

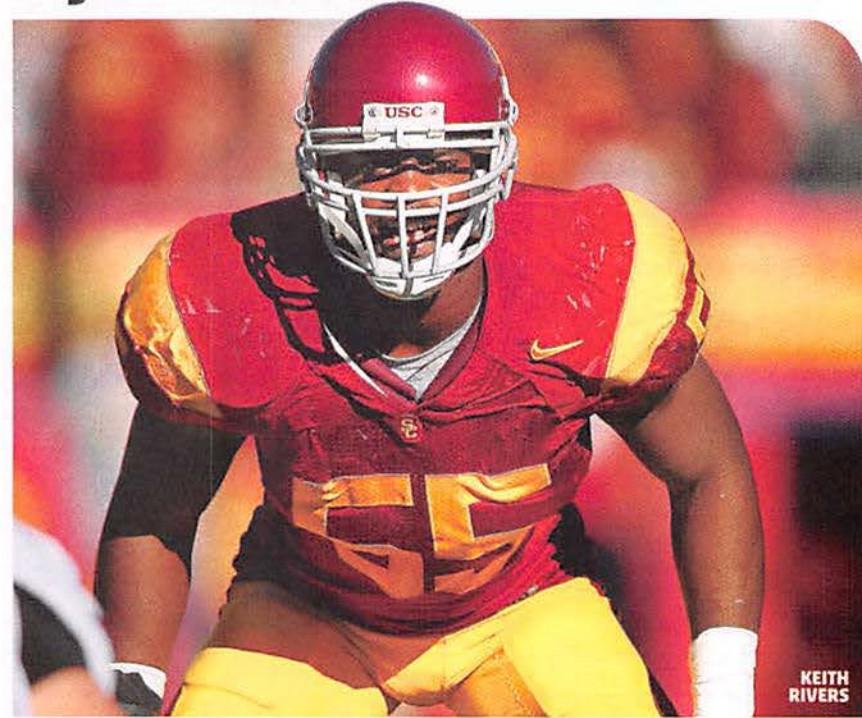
Outside linebackers must have the strength to shed blocks, the speed to make plays from sideline-to-sideline and the athletic ability to play in zone or man coverage. In a 4-3 scheme, outside linebackers rarely rush the passer; teams use a speedy weakside linebacker as a situational pass rusher coming off the edge. In a 3-4, outside linebackers are a team's primary pass rushers but must be big enough to hold up at the line.

## 2007 DRAFT

OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS TAKEN: 16

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	2	1	1	3	4	4	1

Rivers rules this list, but look for a dozen to get drafted in the first four rounds



KEITH RIVERS

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 KEITH RIVERS

> USC

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT
2004	13	12	2.5	1
2005	35	17	1.0	1
2006	47	38	2.0	0
2007	44	34	0.0	0

6-1 7/8 236 4.60

FINAL GRADE 8.5

**NFL comparison:** Derrick Brooks, Buccaneers

**Against inside run:** Avoids blockers and moves through traffic quickly. Shows an explosive burst to finish plays with hard hits. Uses his hands and athleticism well to avoid blockers, but is not strong against blockers at the point of attack. If blockers lock up on him, he gets driven out of plays too easily. **Grade: 7.5**

**Against outside run:** Accelerates to the ball quickly and shows the speed to chase down running backs. From the back side, he avoids traffic and chases down the ball. Maintains outside containment on runs his way, keeping plays inside of him. **Grade: 8.5**

**Blitz/coverage:** Consistently pressures the quarterback. Times inside blitzes well. When blitzing off the edge, uses his quickness and burst to defeat blockers around the corner or with quick pass-rush moves. Has experience at defensive end, which

helped develop pass-rush moves. In pass coverage, he is adept at zone and man-to-man coverage.

Reads the quarterback well, closes quickly and uses his front arm to break up passes. Shows the speed to cover tight ends and running backs in man-to-man coverage. **Grade: 9.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Is smart and instinctive, identifying plays and accelerating to the ball quickly. Shows the speed to chase down plays sideline-to-sideline. Uses his hands well to defeat pass blockers and keep them from getting a hold of him. **Grade: 8.5**

**Pursuit/tackling:** Chases down plays in backside pursuit. Shows sideline-to-sideline range and an explosive burst to finish plays. Fights through blocks and pops up off the ground when cut. Is a good tackler who often delivers hard hits. When chasing hard in pursuit, he has a bad habit of getting a little upright and thus overrunning some tackles. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Rivers is an elite athlete who flies around the field making impact plays. He can do it all—produce as a blitzer, make tackles on running plays at him and break up passes in man-to-man and zone coverage. There is no doubt Rivers has the tools to be a three-down linebacker in the NFL, and he is likely a high first-round pick.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS are graded:** **Against inside run:** Steps up and fills the hole, physical, takes on blockers. **Against outside run:** Wards off blocks, gets to sideline, pursuit. **Blitz/pass rush:** Power or finesse, use of hands, feet. **Key and diagnose:** Reads and reacts, gets jump on the ball. **Lateral pursuit:** Gets over trash, hips, sideline chase. **Tackling:** Wraps up, physical, drags down, solid. **Pass drop:** Hips and turns, depth, zone coverage. **Pass coverage/hands:** Man coverage, hips and turns.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

## 2ND ROUND

2 QUENTIN GROVES  
AUBURN

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT
2003	1	2	0.0	0
2004	19	4	7.5	0
2005	8	13	6.0	0
2006	24	11	9.5	0
2007	23	15	3.0	0

6-3½ 248 4.42

FINAL GRADE 7.9

**NFL comparison:** Kamerion Wimbley, Browns**Against inside run:** Flashes the ability to fill holes, blow up lead blockers and make tackles. Plays a little upright in tight quarters, preventing him from moving through traffic. **Grade: 6.5****Against outside run:** Is helped by his experience at defensive end. On running plays at him, he excels at taking on the tight end or H-back blocker and uses his hands well. Flashes explosive closing burst. **Grade: 8.0****Blitz/coverage:** Is at his best rushing the passer. Shows a quick first step and speed to beat offensive tackles around the corner. Changes directions smoothly, and then bursts back underneath to beat offensive tackles inside. Shows an explosive closing burst to the quarterback, finishing sacks with force. **Grade: 7.0****Run/pass recognition:** When aligned at defensive end, he did not play to his ability. Once moved to outside linebacker, he was much more consistent at reading plays. Must improve at reading "run or pass" from a standing alignment to avoid getting fooled by play-action fakes. **Grade: 6.5****Pursuit/tackling:** Shows elite athleticism to make plays from sideline-to-sideline. Displays elite speed and closing burst to finish plays. Is not a picture-perfect tackler, but uses his long arms and strength to get ballcarriers to the ground. **Grade: 8.5****Bottom line:** Groves could be a dominant force but almost never played to the level he was capable of at Auburn. After switching to outside linebacker, he was much more productive. Groves will be limited to a pass-rush specialist as a rookie before becoming a starter in Year 2.3 JORDON DIZON  
COLORADO

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT
2004	54	36	1.0	0
2005	46	19	3.0	0
2006	80	57	4.0	0
2007	128	47	4.0	2

5-11½ 228 4.66

FINAL GRADE 7.5

**NFL comparison:** Ernie Sims, Lions**Against inside run:** Can slide and avoid blockers in traffic and close quickly to deliver hard hits on running backs. Lacks bulk and size to consistently hold his ground at point of attack. **Grade: 6.5****Against outside run:** Shows the speed to chase down plays in pursuit with an explosive closing burst to finish. On outside runs to his side, he consistently shoots through or around blocks to make plays. **Grade: 8.0****Blitz/coverage:** Is an aggressive blitzer with a nice closing burst. Reads the quarterback well; plants, drives and closes aggressively to go for pass breakups. Shows good awareness picking up running backs. **Grade: 7.5****Run/pass recognition:** Is smart in reading and reacting to plays quickly. Shows good instincts anddoes not get fooled by misdirection. Accelerates to full speed toward the ball in a flash. **Grade: 8.0****Pursuit/tackling:** Shows sideline-to-sideline range and good speed. Reads the play and gets started toward the ball quickly. Shows explosive closing burst to finish plays. Moves through traffic with ease, avoiding blockers. Is fast and aggressive and will overrun some tackles. **Grade: 8.0****Bottom line:** Dizon is the type of linebacker whose value has gone up the past decade, as NFL teams have put more emphasis on athleticism and coverage abilities. He should become a solid NFL starter who makes plays in every situation.

## 3RD ROUND

4 XAVIER ADIBI  
VIRGINIA TECH

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT
2004	21	4	2.0	1
2005	28	41	3.0	2
2006	29	53	3.0	3
2007	55	60	3.0	2

6-1½ 220 4.62

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Lance Briggs, Bears**Strengths:** Is a good athlete, with the speed and closing burst to make plays all over the field. Shows good instincts to read plays and react quickly. Reads the quarterback well and flashes the closing burst to break up passes. Shows the quick footwork, athleticism and speed to cover tight ends and running backs in man-to-man coverage.**Weaknesses:** Is a bit thin. Lacks bulk to hold his ground against offensive linemen on run blocks. Does not move through traffic well, failing to use his hands to protect legs from cut blocks. Misses more open-field tackles than he should; has a bad habit of stopping feet and diving.**Bottom line:** It's easy to fall in love with Adibi because he is always around the ball and makes a lot of highlight hits. He fits best at weakside linebacker in a 4-3 scheme.5 GENO HAYES\*  
FLORIDA STATE

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	SACKS	INT
2005	13	4	0.0	0
2006	31	28	3.0	1
2007	49	31	5.0	1

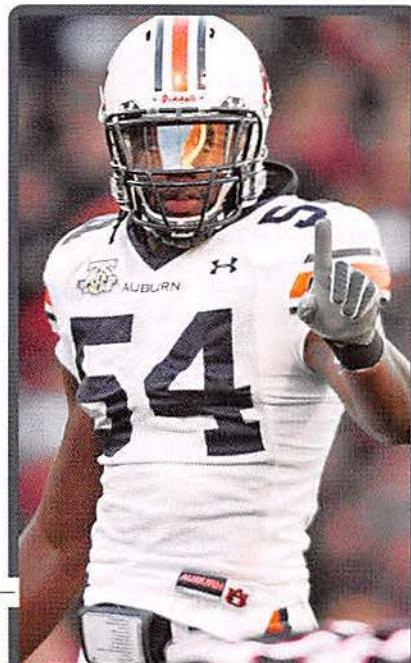
6-2 215 4.60

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Clint Ingram, Jaguars**Strengths:** Is quick and flies around the field with passion. Uses quickness and agility to avoid blockers easily. Shows good instincts to read and react to plays, especially to disrupt screen passes. Reads the quarterback well.**Weaknesses:** Looks undersized. Gets overaggressive and launches to make highlight hits instead of fundamental tackles. Lacks elite speed to catch fast players in pursuit.**Bottom line:** Hayes could move up draft boards because of the lack of depth in the 2008 class. He fits best at outside because of his size and inconsistent ability to shed blocks. Hayes will become a productive weakside starter in a 4-3 scheme.6 DAN CONNOR  
PENN STATE

6-2½ 233 4.70

FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** David Harris, Jets**Strengths:** Shows good instincts and quickness to

## SKILL SET

## ► BEST AGAINST INSIDE RUN

Dan Connor &gt; Penn State

Connor is a tough, hard-nosed linebacker who takes on blockers strong at the point and clogs the hole consistently.

## ► BEST AGAINST OUTSIDE RUN

Keith Rivers &gt; USC

Rivers consistently flies around the field, making tackles in pursuit. His acceleration, speed and closing burst give him sideline range against the outside run.

## ► BEST PASS RUSHER

Quentin Groves &gt; Auburn

Groves is at his best rushing the quarterback from a wide two-point alignment. He gets off the ball quickly and aggressively, and has the speed and burst to beat offensive tackles around the corner and back inside.

## ► BEST IN COVERAGE

Xavier Adibi &gt; Virginia Tech

Adibi is very quick and smooth playing off the ball in coverage, reads the quarterback well and has the closing burst and ball skills to break up passes.

## ► MOST VERSATILE

Keith Rivers &gt; USC

Rivers has the combination of size, strength and athleticism to make plays, whether it's chasing down running backs or in pass coverage.

make plays sideline-to-sideline. Accelerates toward the ball quickly on running plays away. Stays on tight ends' hips in man-to-man coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Is not an elite athlete. Does not make many impact plays. Lacks the speed to chase down NFL ballcarriers. Is stiff and upright, missing some tackles. Looks mechanical dropping into zone coverage and lacks closing burst. Will struggle to cover elite NFL tight ends.**Bottom line:** Connor has received a ton of publicity but lacks the athleticism to be an elite NFL player. He has third- to fourth-round value for teams that employ a 4-3 defense.

## 7 ERIN HENDERSON\*

> MARYLAND

6-3 236 4.65 FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** Eric Barton, Jets

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete. Shows quick footwork and good instincts in reading and reacting quickly to plays. Changes directions quickly to avoid blockers. Flashes ability to fill holes and disrupt runs in the backfield. Breaks quickly to cut in front of receivers to break up or intercept passes.

**Weaknesses:** Does not play as big as his measured size; looks thinner on film and struggles with blockers at the point of attack. Lacks elite speed and will struggle to catch NFL running backs. Will bite on play-action fakes.

**Bottom line:** Henderson played weakside linebacker in Maryland's 4-3 alignment and inside linebacker in its 3-4 scheme. In the NFL, he is best suited to play on the weak side of a 4-3 defense. Henderson is no game-changer, but projects as a solid NFL starter.

## 8 ALVIN BOWEN

> IOWA STATE

6-11 220 4.65 FINAL GRADE 6.0

**NFL comparison:** Michael Boley, Falcons

**Strengths:** Is athletic, with the quickness, acceleration and speed to make plays sideline-to-sideline. Moves easily through traffic. When dropping into coverage, he is smooth, fluid and quick. Reads the quarterback well and closes in time to play the ball. **Weaknesses:** Does not always attack lead blockers at the point of contact, getting jolted and driven backward. Will lose focus when tackling.

**Bottom line:** In games our scouts graded, Bowen was involved in a tackle every 6.2 snaps, which is outstanding for a linebacker. He is versatile and should become a productive NFL starter.

## 9 CLIFF AVRIL

> PURDUE

6-3 252 4.65 FINAL GRADE 6.0

**NFL comparison:** Chris Gocong, Eagles

**Strengths:** Shows a quick, powerful first step. Is smart; understands the intricacies of the game and shows good instincts to find the ball quickly. Uses his hands well to avoid and shed blocks. Lays out to make tackles. Hustles non-stop and covers a lot of ground. **Weaknesses:** Must get stronger. Does not use his hands effectively as a pass rusher and falls off tackles when his footwork is not right.

**Bottom line:** Avril is one of the better athletes in the 2008 class, and projects as an outside linebacker in a 3-4 scheme.

## 4TH ROUND

## 10 ALI HIGHSMITH

> LSU

5-11<sup>3/4</sup> 229 4.65 FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a fluid athlete who is solid against the run and pass. Gets a deep drop in pass coverage and reads the quarterback well. Closes quickly on passes in front of him, often breaking up the play. **Weaknesses:** Lacks elite speed and explosiveness. Bites on play-action fakes and misdirection plays. Lacks bulk and size. Sometimes plays out of control, diving at ballcarriers and missing tackles.

**Bottom line:** Highsmith is a frustrating prospect

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

Jordon Dizon > Colorado

Dizon came to the Senior Bowl considered an undersized linebacker, but left Mobile viewed as a fast and very athletic linebacker who will be productive in the NFL.

### ON THE DECLINE

Cliff Avril > Purdue

Avril struggled during Senior Bowl week and is now viewed only as a rush-linebacker prospect.

### SLEEPER

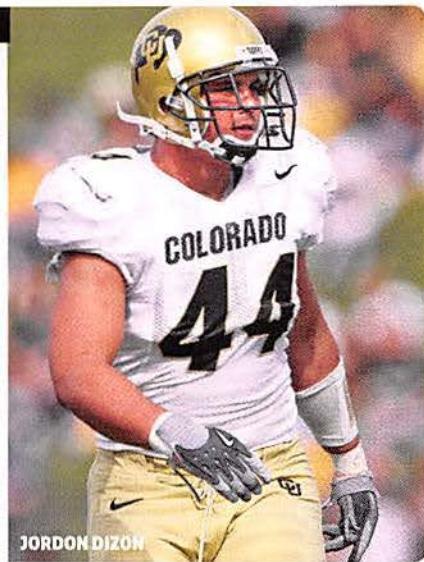
Gary Guyton > Georgia Tech

Guyton was overshadowed at Georgia Tech by Philip Wheeler, but had a great senior season and shined at the East-West Shrine Game, which led to him being a late invite to the Senior Bowl, where he performed very well.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

Ali Highsmith > LSU

Highsmith has the footwork, athleticism and competitiveness to be very productive, but does not always identify the play in time to get involved.



### BIGGEST RISK

Quentin Groves > Auburn

Despite his enormous athletic ability, Groves is still a conversion prospect, which is always a concern.

because he does not make as many plays as he should. While not big or strong enough to play in all NFL schemes, he projects as a solid, three-down linebacker for most teams.

## 11 ROBERT JAMES

> ARIZONA STATE

5-10<sup>3/4</sup> 216 4.70 FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete who makes plays all over the field. Drops quickly in zone coverage. Reads the quarterback well and closes quickly to break up passes. Easily picks up and covers tight ends and running backs in man-to-man coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Has some durability issues. Lacks elite speed, which limits his ability to chase down fast ballcarriers on the outside.

**Bottom line:** James came out of nowhere in 2007 to become an NFL prospect. He needs to add bulk, but in time should become a good starter.

## 12 LeRUE RUMPH

> N.C. STATE

6-1 223 4.65 FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is athletic. Jams tight ends nicely. Is smart and instinctive; starts toward the ball in a flash. Covers running backs in man-to-man coverage all over the field. Shows speed to chase down plays.

**Weaknesses:** Does not consistently play to his talent level. Struggles to shed blockers once they get a hold of him. Does not consistently fill the hole fast or aggressively on runs at him.

**Bottom line:** Rumph is a well-built linebacker who is always in the right place. He will probably be drafted lower than rated here, but will become a good NFL starter, either at strongside linebacker in a 4-3 defense or inside linebacker for 3-4 teams.

## 13 BRUCE DAVIS

> UCLA

6-2<sup>5/8</sup> 241 4.65 FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, agility and explosiveness to make plays rushing the passer and against the run. Accelerates to full

speed quickly to chase down ballcarriers.

**Weaknesses:** Played defensive end at UCLA but lacks the bulk and size to play end in the NFL. Is not as good an athlete as most linebackers. Must learn to play effectively in zone coverage and develop his ability to read the quarterback.

**Bottom line:** History shows that most college defensive ends who switch to outside linebacker fail, so Davis' position change will not be easy. Still, he has too much natural athleticism to slide too far.

## 14 GARY GUYTON

> GEORGIA TECH

6-1<sup>1/8</sup> 240 4.85 FINAL GRADE 5.7

**Strengths:** Is a fluid athlete with the quickness and speed to produce in all situations. Moves quickly at the snap. Shows good instincts and does not get fooled by fakes or misdirection plays. In coverage, he is productive in zone and man-to-man.

**Weaknesses:** Does not make game-changing plays. Struggles to shed blockers in time to make tackles. Lacks elite speed and explosiveness to catch fast players from behind.

**Bottom line:** Guyton will not be drafted as high as he's rated here because of his lack of explosiveness and elite speed. However, he is the type of linebacker who ends up being a Day 2 steal and develops into a good, all-around starter.

## 5TH ROUND

## 15 DERRICK DOGETT

> OREGON STATE

6-2<sup>1/4</sup> 203 4.65 FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Shows good athleticism and makes plays sideline-to-sideline. Reads plays quickly and reacts in a blink. Is smooth and fluid in coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Is undersized and must add bulk. Does not fill the hole aggressively, allowing lead blockers to dictate action.

**Bottom line:** Doggett is an undersized linebacker

who can chase plays all over the field. He could be an eventual starter if he adds 15-20 pounds.

## 16 DAVID VOBORA

&gt; IDAHO

6-1 $\frac{1}{8}$  220 4.64

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Makes plays all over the field. Is smart, instinctive and addicted to film study. Shows great leadership skills. Displays good speed and quickness. Shows outstanding zone-coverage skills.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal strength and gets engulfed and driven back when taking on blockers inside. Displays only average hands and should make more plays in coverage.

**Bottom line:** Vobora may not be drafted this high, but he'll play in the NFL for a long time if he improves his strength. He projects as a fourth- to fifth-round pick whose stock is improving.

## 17 TRAMAIN BILLIE

&gt; CLEMSON

5-11 207 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is athletic and fast, chasing down plays all over the field. Reads routes correctly and delivers hits immediately after the catch. Easily covers running backs and tight ends in man-to-man coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and lacks ideal bulk, which hinders his ability to shed blockers. Does not sense side blocks and gets driven out of plays too easily. Has durability issues.

**Bottom line:** After missing the 2006 season with a broken ankle, Billie proved he was fully healthy as a senior. He may not go this high in the draft (if even drafted at all), but has the chance to become a quality NFL starter if he bulks up.

## 18 STANFORD KEGLAR

&gt; PURDUE

6-1 $\frac{7}{8}$  245 4.69

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is intelligent and shows good awareness and instincts. Moves well laterally, using his

speed to stop perimeter runs. Drops well into zone coverage. Works hard to the whistle.

**Weaknesses:** Must be more consistent as a tackler. Whiffs on some tackles in the open field, going for highlight hits instead. Gets too high in man-to-man coverage and struggles to stick with receivers out of breaks. Is a marginal blitzer.

**Bottom line:** While not flashy, Keglar is a tough competitor who makes plays by getting in proper position. He projects as a solid fifth-round pick whose stock could rise.

## 19 CURTIS GATEWOOD

&gt; VANDERBILT

6-2 $\frac{1}{4}$  224 4.60

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Shows good speed, quickness and athleticism. Works hard and is around the ball a lot. Uses his hands well at the point of attack and as a pass rusher. Closes on the quarterback quickly. Shows good flexibility and agility. Is a sure tackler.

**Weaknesses:** Must get bigger and stronger. Has not played much at linebacker, and must learn the intricacies of playing in coverage. Does not tackle ballcarriers with force.

**Bottom line:** Gatewood played defensive end at Vanderbilt, but must switch to outside linebacker in the NFL. He is a solid sixth-round selection whose stock could rise.

## 20 BO RUUD

&gt; NEBRASKA

6-2 $\frac{1}{8}$  234 4.85

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is smart and competitive. Drops into coverage smoothly. Reads the quarterback well, closing quickly to break up passes. Has experience at weakside and strongside linebacker.

**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete who lacks flexibility and agility to consistently make open-field tackles. Lacks burst to catch up once beaten. Must use his hands better to shed blocks.

**Bottom line:** Ruud is not as talented as his

brother, Barrett, who plays for Tampa Bay. While worthy of a late-round pick due to his upside, he might never be more than a backup weakside linebacker.

## 7TH ROUND

### 21 MARCUS HOWARD

&gt; GEORGIA

6-0 $\frac{1}{8}$  225 4.61

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** As a pass rusher, he shows quick footwork and good speed. Uses his hands well to jolt offensive tackles to stay free and beat them around the corner.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the size and strength to hold up at the point of attack against offensive linemen. Shows no real pass-rush moves.

**Bottom line:** Howard is an outside linebacker/defensive end 'tweener. He has the skills to make it in the NFL as a pass rusher and special teams player and could develop into a starter in time.

### 22 BRYAN KEHL

&gt; BYU

6-2 $\frac{1}{2}$  234 4.75

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is smart, instinctive and always around the ball. Drops quickly into zone coverage. Reads the quarterback well, closing quickly on passes in front of him. Makes hard hits right after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks big-play explosiveness. Does not consistently play with an aggressive streak. Lacks elite speed to chase down plays along the far sideline. Is inconsistent as a blitzer.

**Bottom line:** Kehl is not a flashy linebacker who grabs your attention with speed and explosiveness, but is strong and shows plenty of heart, hustle and intelligence. If he goes undrafted, Kehl should make an NFL team as a hardworking backup.

### 23 SHAWN CRABLE

&gt; MICHIGAN

6-5 $\frac{1}{8}$  241 4.75

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Flashes big-play ability as a pass rusher. Is smooth dropping into coverage and closes to make tackles after the catch. Is versatile; played outside linebacker and defensive end.

**Weaknesses:** Is an end/linebacker 'tweener who struggled to produce at either position in college. Must read and react to plays more quickly. Does not break up many passes.

**Bottom line:** Crable is a frustrating prospect whose future is uncertain. His best chance in the NFL is as a rush linebacker in a 3-4 scheme.

### 24 WESLEY WOODYARD

&gt; KENTUCKY

6-0 $\frac{1}{8}$  219 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is athletic, and chases down plays sideline-to-sideline. Drops quickly into short-zone coverage and reads the quarterback well.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks good instincts. Is not an effective blitzer. Lacks ideal height and bulk, which is a bad combination for a linebacker.

**Bottom line:** Woodyard is a disappointing prospect who is a better athlete than football player. If his instincts improve and he adds 10-15 pounds of bulk, Woodyard could stick as an NFL linebacker.



BRUCE DAVIS

## 25 MARCUS RICHARDSON

TROY

6-0 229 4.56

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete who accelerates to full speed quickly. Shows the speed to chase down ballcarriers. Changes direction quickly.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks good instincts. Is often late reading the play, getting stuck in traffic or reacting late to pick up running backs and tight ends in coverage. Frequently loses balance when tackling.

**Bottom line:** Richardson does not produce to his level of talent because of questionable instincts. However, he will position himself to be drafted with solid pre-draft workouts.

## 26 BRANDON RENKART

RUTGERS

6-1 3/4 230 4.85

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Is aggressive, consistently attacking plays and delivering hard hits. Keeps ballcarriers inside of him and flashes the ability to shed blocks. Is a good athlete who is strong and well built.

**Weaknesses:** Is too aggressive at times, running upright and then lunging and missing tackles. Bites on play-action fakes. Lacks elite speed and is often a step away from making a play.

**Bottom line:** Renkart is an inside/outside linebacker 'tweener. His aggressive, physical style fits better at middle linebacker.

## 27 KELLY POPPINGA

BYU

6-1 3/4 240 4.85

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Is a fluid athlete who moves with ease in the open field. Shows surprising quickness and is smooth dropping into zone coverage. Has the strength to stack up blockers at the point of attack.

**Weaknesses:** Is not a quick-twitch athlete. Does not make nearly as many plays as he should.

**Bottom line:** Poppinga, the younger brother of the Packers' Brady Poppinga, is a smooth athlete, but lacks explosiveness. While he might be better suited to play defensive end, Kelly should first be tried at linebacker.

## 28 RYAN KARL

TENNESSEE

6-0 225 4.75

**FINAL GRADE 4.0**

**Strengths:** Is smart, instinctive and carries out assignments. Plays faster than his timed speed would suggest. Is consistently around the ball.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks agility, flexibility, explosiveness and speed. Can't stay with running backs and tight ends in man-to-man coverage downfield. Struggles to adjust and tackle in the open field. His lack of speed will be more obvious in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Karl is the type of linebacker who gets overlooked because he does not look the part, but has many intangibles to make it in the NFL. Karl is worth seventh-round consideration and could become an outstanding backup and spot starter.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

## 29 STEVE ALLEN

WEST TEXAS A&M

6-0 3/4 232 4.65

**FINAL GRADE 3.9**

**Strengths:** Has good speed. Reacts quickly to outside running plays and screen passes, and

## IN PROFILE

### KEITH RIVERS

USC

**N**ot long after Keith Rivers arrived on the University of Southern California campus in 2004, he discovered jersey No. 55 was waiting for him. Apparently equipment manager Dino Dennis has an eye for talent.

After all, Trojan linebackers such as Junior Seau, Willie McGinest and Chris Claiborne wore No. 55, and all were top-10 NFL Draft picks. Now, Rivers seems a strong candidate to join them, especially after performing well at January's Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

Wearing No. 55 came with lofty responsibilities, which Rivers learned early at USC. He was lagging during a practice his freshman year when senior Lofa Tatupu, now a starter for the Seattle Seahawks, took him aside.

"He said, 'You can't be doing that,'" Rivers recalls. "Fifty-five means too much."

The 6-1, 236-pound Rivers represented the number admirably during a four-year career that included appearances on several All-America teams in 2007. Still, scouts are hesitant to label him a sure thing. He lacks lower body strength and doesn't have the natural instincts expected of linebackers.

"All you can do is work on things and get better," Rivers says. "Whatever needs to be done, I'm willing to do it. I know I can get off blocks better and need to work a little more in the phone booth, that tight one-on-one space. But I'm versatile and can play in any defense."

shows the short-area burst to close quickly. Hustles to make plays downfield. Shows good flexibility.

**Weaknesses:** Is undersized. Has had academic issues and attended a number of colleges. Lacks strength and gets engulfed and driven off the ball.

**Bottom line:** Allen is always around the ball, but his off-field baggage will probably keep him from getting drafted.

## 30 BRANDON OGLETREE

IDAHO

6-2 230 4.60

**FINAL GRADE 3.9**

**Strengths:** Shows great speed and athleticism. Covers plenty of ground, making plays sideline-to-sideline. Shows good flexibility and movement.

**Weaknesses:** Is a better athlete than football player. Doesn't play aggressively. Gets knocked to the ground because of poor instincts. Doesn't use his hands effectively to shed blockers.



Rivers played mostly weakside linebacker for USC coach Pete Carroll, which furthered comparisons to Tampa Bay's Derrick Brooks and Chicago's Lance Briggs. At the Senior Bowl, Rivers lined up mostly at strongside and middle linebacker.

"I'm used to the 'Will' but I think I can play anywhere," he says. "I'm sure it will help if I can be versatile and play all three."

Rivers considered going pro after his junior season, but returned in part because he didn't think he had provided the complete body of work that Trojan fans expect from a No. 55.

"I didn't want to be a [No.] 55 that people forgot about," Rivers says. "I didn't want people to think they gave it to all of these other great players and some other guy."

Rivers knows that the Senior Bowl might be the last time he dons No. 55 for a while, since it's a popular number among NFL veterans.

"I'll be just a rookie, to be seen and not heard," he says. "I have to earn the right to ask for a number."

—Pete Williams

**Bottom line:** Olgetree is a classic late-round/free-agent prospect with size and speed. At best, he projects as a special teams contributor.

## 31 NICK WATKINS

CLEMSON

6-0 1/2 213 4.70

**FINAL GRADE 3.9**

**Strengths:** Chases down plays all over the field. Can be a physical blitzer when aggressive. Shows good hands to make tough interceptions.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and lacks bulk. Does not use his hands aggressively to shed blocks or sift through traffic. Almost always goes for the highlight hit instead of the solid tackle.

**Bottom line:** Watkins will have a tough time making the jump to the NFL because of his lack of size. However, he should get a chance to compete for a spot on an NFL roster.

BRAD SCHLOSS / SPORTSFILE

**B+**

# CORNERBACKS

While a lot of first-day talent is spread out among this year's class of cornerbacks, there are also a number of good prospects who will be drafted from the third to fifth rounds and will end up becoming solid NFL starters in the league. Despite only one player getting a first-round grade by War Room scouts, as many as seven could be drafted in the initial round.

And don't be surprised if a corner or two comes from out of nowhere to end up being picked in the first or second round because of a great workout. A few who might fall into that category are Tennessee State's Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie, Iowa's Charles Godfrey and Indiana's Tracy Porter.

The top two cornerbacks this year are South Florida's Mike Jenkins and Troy's Leodis McKelvin. Jenkins has the height and athleticism to cover any receiver he goes against. Add in his long arms and a perceived enjoyment of playing physical, McKelvin becomes the complete package at corner. He has the chance to start early in his NFL career and will be a strong and versatile cornerback who can be effective playing off the ball and in press coverage.

McKelvin doesn't have Jenkins' size, but is a top athlete and can stay on a receiver's hip all over the field. Although McKelvin suffered a hamstring injury that kept him out of the Senior Bowl, teams should remain confident given his stellar career at Troy.

After Jenkins and McKelvin, there are a number of cornerbacks who were OK players in college but will end up being drafted much higher than their on-field production dictates because they played well in postseason all-star games and had good workouts.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-1	205	4.40
NFL Minimum	5-9	175	4.55

Cornerback is one of the most pressure-filled positions. A cornerback must have outstanding athletic ability, explosive quickness and excellent footwork. The ability to explode out of a backpedal or turn the hips in man-to-man coverage is pivotal. Corners need the size and strength to handle physical receivers in the red zone and must be adequate against the run. Confidence is a characteristic that can't be overlooked.

## 2007 DRAFT

CORNERBACKS TAKEN: 37

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	4	3	4	4	8	6	8

A duo from non-football powerhouses headlines this deep, talented group



MIKE JENKINS

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 MIKE JENKINS ► SOUTH FLORIDA

FINAL GRADE: 8.3			
6-0	200	4.45	
TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2004	20	7	0
2005	33	5	2
2006	18	9	1
2007	31	10	3

**NFL Comparison:** Chris McAlister, Ravens

**Coverage skills:** Has good height and shows the quickness, athletic ability and speed to excel in all types of coverage. Stays with receivers man-to-man despite raw footwork. Shows ability to plant, drive and close explosively on passes, breaking them up or delivering violent hits. **Grade: 8.5**

**Run/pass recognition:** Diagnoses plays well and does not bite on play-action fakes. Reads the

quarterback well in zone coverage, using explosiveness to close on passes. **Grade: 8.5**

**Closing speed:** Shows good closing burst on passes in front of him, breaking up plays. Turns and runs with receivers in bump-and-run coverage, staying with them all over the field. **Grade: 8.5**

**Ball skills:** Shows body control and coordination to use his long arms to reach in front and break up passes. Can make tough interceptions. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run support:** Improved in 2007 to become a real force in this area. Comes up quickly to deliver hard hits. Maintains balance and tackles well in the open field. **Grade: 8.0**

**Bottom line:** Jenkins clearly put in a lot of time and hard work to improve after his junior season. He is now much more consistent, emerging as more of a playmaker who allows few big-play completions. Jenkins will be a solid NFL corner.

\* Denotes underclassman

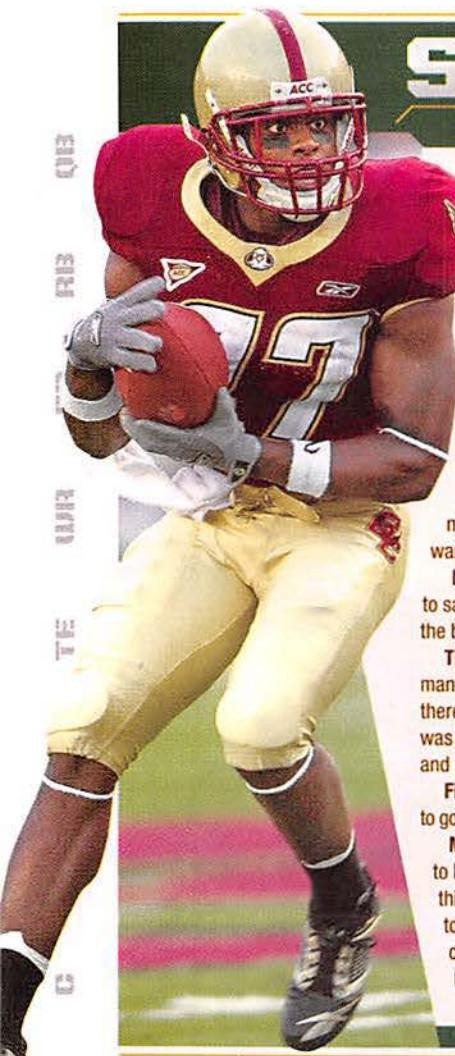
**How CORNERBACKS are graded:** Man coverage: Hips and turns, pedal and acceleration. Zone coverage: Range, covers ground, deep half, awareness. Closing quickness: Plant and drive, gets to the ball in the air. Key and diagnose: Reads the quarterback, anticipates, in the right spot. Lateral pursuit: Gets over trash, hips, sideline chase. Tackling: Wraps up, physical, drags down, solid technique. Pass drop: Hips and turns, depth, zone coverage.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

# SNAPSHOT

DeJuan Tribble



**My breakthrough moment as a college player:** Freshman year against Notre Dame. It was my first time really getting action on the field, and I was able to come through with an interception against Brady Quinn. After that, I feel like I established myself as a player.

**My best memory from college:** This year, winning 11 games was big for us. We hadn't done that since 1940.

**My college stats fail to show ...** my aggressiveness and passion for the game. I love to go out there and play football. It's something I love to do.

**The part of my game that will need the most work in the NFL:** Definitely my tackling ability, and probably man-to-man coverage. I played a lot of zone in college. So I definitely want to work on a lot more man [coverage].

**My opponents would say the best thing I do is ...** I'm going to say my instincts and ball awareness. I feel like I know where the ball is, and I feel like I make pretty good plays because of it.

**The NFL player I can't wait to face:** All of them are great, man. It's definitely an accomplishment to be in the NFL. But there's not one player in particular. Growing up, my favorite player was [wide receiver] Jerry Rice, but he's not playing anymore. He and [cornerback] Deion Sanders were probably the biggest two.

**Five years from now, I will be known as ...** a player who loves to go out there and compete each day and gives it all on the field.

**My advice to players entering college this year:** Definitely to humble yourself. I feel like a lot of kids come into college thinking that they're the man, that they know how it's supposed to be done. After five years, I know how much work the college coaches put into a program. I'd just tell guys to mature and look at the bigger picture than just themselves.

—Mike Giglio

## 2ND ROUND

### 2 LEODIS McKELVIN

> TROY

5-10½ 190 4.44		FINAL GRADE 7.9	
TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2004	13	4	1
2005	26	4	0
2006	56	9	1
2007	50	10	2

**NFL comparison:** Johnathan Joseph, Bengals  
**Coverage skills:** Shows top-notch athleticism to be productive in all types of coverage. Is aggressive trying to break up passes, and delivers hard hits after the ball arrives. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows natural instincts to diagnose plays, and doesn't get fooled by play-action fakes or misdirection. Reads receivers' routes well. Excels in zone coverage and closes quickly. **Grade: 8.0**

**Closing speed:** Shows an explosive closing burst to reach receivers in time to play the ball or deliver hard hits after the catch. Displays the speed to run with nearly any receiver downfield. **Grade: 8.0**

**Ball skills:** When getting good position, breaks up passes by aggressively reaching in front of receivers while maintaining body control to avoid penalties. Shows the hands to make interceptions; didn't get many chances in college because few opponents threw his way. Fields punts and kickoffs cleanly. **Grade: 8.5**

**Run support:** Comes up aggressively and does not

hesitate to deliver hard hits. Must improve technique as a tackler; stops his feet too often, diving at the ballcarrier. His tendency to attempt arm tackles will not work in the NFL. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** McKelvin has been overshadowed by cornerback prospects from bigger schools, but is better than nearly all of them. Unlike most small-school cornerbacks, McKelvin shows great footwork, which will ease his transition to the NFL. He will become a solid starter in any scheme.

### 3 BRANDON FLOWERS\*

> VIRGINIA TECH

5-10 190 4.50		FINAL GRADE 7.9	
TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2004	1	0	1
2005	13	7	1
2006	29	22	3
2007	56	30	5

**NFL comparison:** Quentin Jammer, Chargers  
**Coverage skills:** Changes direction with ease; snaps around the other way quickly to stay with receivers out of cuts. **Grade: 8.5**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows excellent instincts and awareness, playing faster than his 40 time would indicate. Does not get fooled by misdirection plays or receivers' double moves. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage. Is adept at reading receivers' routes. **Grade: 8.5**

**Closing speed:** Lacks premier speed, but uses quick footwork, instincts and ability to transition quickly and close on passes faster than expected.

Will struggle to stay with the NFL's fastest receivers downfield. **Grade: 7.0**

**Ball skills:** When close to the play, shows the body control, coordination and hands to reach in front of receivers and break up passes without committing penalties. Shows the hands to make tough interceptions. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run support:** Comes up quickly, keeping knees bent and maintaining leverage and control to make physical tackles. Is a fundamentally sound tackler in the open field. Will blow up receivers behind the line of scrimmage. **Grade: 8.0**

**Bottom line:** Cornerbacks with Flowers' intelligence, instincts and competitive edge are usually more productive in the NFL. Flowers will become a solid NFL starter in any type of defense, improving over time because of his preparation.

### 4 REGGIE SMITH\*

> OKLAHOMA

6-1 197 4.50		FINAL GRADE 7.7	
TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2005	30	17	2
2006	30	11	3
2007	57	21	3

**NFL comparison:** Marlin Jackson, Colts

**Coverage skills:** Shows the athleticism to cover well when using good technique. Has the speed to run with receivers downfield and closes fast on short passes in front of him. Once beaten by double moves, he cannot recover. **Grade: 7.7**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows good instincts to diagnose plays and does not get fooled by play-action fakes. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage, allowing him to plant, drive and close quickly when playing with good balance and footwork. Bites on receivers' double moves and gets turned around at times. **Grade: 7.5**

**Closing speed:** Shows an explosive closing burst to play the ball, but sometimes doesn't arrive in time because of inconsistent transition. Has elite speed to stay on receivers' hips downfield. **Grade: 8.0**

**Ball skills:** Shows instincts and body control to reach in front of receivers and break up passes without committing penalties. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run support:** Is willing to fly upfield and make strong, physical tackles. When under control and balanced, shows the ability to be a good open-field tackler. Occasionally lunges and misses tackles. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** Smith shows the athleticism and versatility to be an NFL prospect at cornerback and safety. He is a tough defender who seems to enjoy playing physical, and should become a solid starter who makes plays and dishes out hard hits.

### 5 ANTOINE CASON

> ARIZONA

6-0½ 189 4.50		FINAL GRADE 7.5	
TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2004	54	16	4
2005	38	12	3
2006	48	14	3
2007	56	15	5

**NFL comparison:** Ty Law, Chiefs

**Coverage skills:** Is a natural; breaks up more passes than catches he allows. Jams receivers in bump-and-run coverage to slow their release; turns and runs to maintain tight coverage all over the field. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows good instincts to identify plays, and does not get fooled by play-

action fakes or misdirection. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage, playing quicker than his 40 time would indicate. **Grade: 8.0**

**Closing speed:** Lacks elite speed and explosive burst; compensates with instincts, quickness and athleticism. Displays a deceptive closing burst to play the ball. Has enough speed to stay with all but the fastest receivers downfield. **Grade: 7.5**

**Ball skills:** Reaches in front of receivers with his front arm to break up passes without committing penalties. Flashes good hands to make tough interceptions, but is inconsistent and drops some easy chances. **Grade: 6.5**

**Run support:** Has a reputation for not being competitive in this area, but, on film, consistently came up and fought through blocks to make tackles. **Grade: 7.5**

**Bottom line:** Cason improved significantly between his junior and senior seasons. He's not a burner, but is a good athlete with all the intangibles to start in the NFL. He also has the intelligence, instincts and toughness to switch to safety.

## 6 DeJUAN TRIBBLE ► BOSTON COLLEGE

5-8½ 190 4.44  FINAL GRADE 7.2

**NFL comparison:** Nathan Vasher, Bears

**Coverage skills:** Is a natural, excelling in all types of coverage. Uses his hands to push receivers around a bit to throw off timing of routes. In zone coverage, he settles into his area and slides and adjusts to what he sees. Makes hard hits right after the catch. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Shows good instincts, consistently reading and reacting to plays correctly. Does not get fooled by pump fakes or fakes by receivers on routes. When in zone coverage, reads the quarterback well to close quickly and play the ball. **Grade: 7.5**

**Closing speed:** Shows an explosive closing burst to play the ball, and has the elite speed to stay with fast receivers downfield. When behind in coverage, he has the speed to catch up. **Grade: 7.5**

**Ball skills:** Reaches around receivers to break up passes without committing penalties. Flashes ability to cut underneath receivers to make tough interceptions. Must improve his hands and concentration; drops some easy interceptions. **Grade: 7.5**

**Run support:** Plays bigger than his size would suggest. Comes upfield quickly and aggressively to deliver a blow. Closes explosively and makes technically sound tackles, but does not do it consistently; tends to get overaggressive and lunge, missing tackles. **Grade: 6.0**

**Bottom line:** Tribble struggled at the Senior Bowl, which hurt his draft status. He will probably be drafted slightly later than where he's rated here because of his lack of height. In time, however, he should become a consistent playmaker in the NFL.

## 7 TERRELL THOMAS ► USC

6-0½ 197 4.45  FINAL GRADE 7.0

**NFL comparison:** Anthony Henry, Cowboys

**Coverage skills:** Has the talent to be an elite cornerback, but must improve his footwork and consistency. In zone coverage, moves in his area and reads the quarterback; plants and drives to play the ball. When playing with his back to the quarterback in man-to-man coverage downfield, he shows the awareness to turn his head in time to play the ball. **Grade: 7.5**

**Run/pass recognition:** Reads and reacts quickly to plays and does not get fooled by misdirection or trick plays. In man-to-man coverage, he does not get fooled by receivers during routes. Reads the run quickly, but lacks the aggressiveness to fly upfield in support. **Grade: 7.5**

**Closing speed:** Has deceptively good speed for his size; his long strides disguise how fast he runs. Accelerates to full speed quickly and can run with any receiver downfield. Flashes a good closing burst to play the ball, but is inconsistent. **Grade: 7.5**

**Ball skills:** Has long arms and shows the technique, timing and coordination to break up passes with his front arm. Does not consistently intercept passes he has a chance at. **Grade: 6.5**

**Run support:** Does not consistently come up in run support; when he does, shows the size, strength and athleticism to make physical open-field tackles. Stops his feet too often and lunges, missing some tackles he should make. Must maintain focus and play under control. **Grade: 5.5**

**Bottom line:** Thomas is the type of prospect who is often undervalued. He lacks good footwork, preventing him from breaking up as many passes as he should. With his size, strength and long arms, however, Thomas makes life difficult for receivers by playing physical. He could switch to safety.

## 3RD ROUND

### 8 JACK IKEGWUONU\* ► WISCONSIN

6-1 201 4.40  FINAL GRADE 6.9

**NFL comparison:** Richard Marshall, Panthers

**Strengths:** Enjoys being physical. Can be dominant in bump-and-run coverage. Shows natural instincts and reads the quarterback well in zone coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Sustained a torn ACL in late January. Must rein in his physical style a bit; will get called for pass interference in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Ikegwuonu is a first-round talent, but his situation changed drastically after he tore his ACL. He could also be downgraded on some draft boards because of pending charges for his alleged involvement in a burglary. However, with few elite corners in this year's draft, expect a team to gamble on Ikegwuonu in the third or fourth round.

### 9 CHEVIS JACKSON ► LSU

5-11½ 188 4.53  FINAL GRADE 6.8

**NFL comparison:** Dre' Bly, Broncos

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with rare quickness and speed for a tall cornerback. Shows good instincts to read the quarterback and then plant, drive and close quickly on passes in front of him. Is willing to get physical with receivers while fighting for the ball, and shows good hands to make interceptions after cutting underneath receivers.

**Weaknesses:** Must improve his footwork. Does not consistently fight hard to make tackles in run support; seems willing to make the play only when he's the last defender.

**Bottom line:** Jackson has good size and playmaking ability and stood out at the Senior Bowl, showing the best combination of athleticism and instincts among all corners. While teams should be wary of drafting Jackson too high, he could become a solid NFL starter with improved technique.

### 10 DOMINIQUE RODGERS-CROMARTIE ► TENNESSEE STATE

6-1½ 183 4.50  FINAL GRADE 6.8

**NFL comparison:** Fabian Washington, Raiders

**Strengths:** Is an elite athlete with the physical tools NFL coaches covet. Shows the hands to make tough interceptions. Also has speed and playmaking ability as a punt returner.

**Weaknesses:** Is a better athlete than football player. Allowed inferior receivers to separate and catch passes. Lacks natural instincts and often reacts late to receivers' routes. Shows sloppy and raw technique, raising questions of how well he learns from coaching. Does not play with intensity.

**Bottom line:** Rodgers-Cromartie is a premier athlete who improved his draft stock tremendously at the Senior Bowl, but must show that wasn't an aberration. Don't be surprised if an NFL team drafts Rodgers-Cromartie as high as Round 1. However, he's a long way from being polished.

### 11 AQIB TALIB\* ► KANSAS

6-2 195 4.50  FINAL GRADE 6.7

**NFL comparison:** Deltha O'Neal, Bengals

**Strengths:** Is smart. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage and flashes ability to plant, drive and close quickly to play the ball. Has good height and long arms to cut off and shield tall receivers. Shows good open-field running skills, making plays as a punt returner and wide receiver in college.

**Weaknesses:** Is not tough or aggressive. Gets upright in bump-and-run coverage and uses his hands to jam receivers inconsistently, allowing easy releases. Lacks elite explosiveness and speed.

**Bottom line:** Talib is a frustrating prospect because he allows too many catches and is a non-factor as a tackler on plays in front of him. He will struggle to produce as a high draft pick should. His ability to contribute on offense is an added value.

### 12 JONATHAN WILHITE ► AUBURN

5-9½ 183 4.50  FINAL GRADE 6.5

**NFL comparison:** Charles Tillman, Bears

**Strengths:** Shows quick footwork and good all-around athleticism. Cuts off and shields receivers well and squeezes them to use the sideline as a weapon. Plays bigger than his size would suggest.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks ideal height and elite speed; can run with most receivers, but fast NFL wideouts will separate downfield. Misses some tackles because of his overaggressiveness.

**Bottom line:** In-depth film evaluation shows Wilhite has the talent to start in the NFL. He likely won't be drafted high because he's short and lacks a blazing 40 time. After a few seasons as a backup, Wilhite will become a productive starter who breaks up passes and makes hard hits.

### 13 PATRICK LEE ► AUBURN

5-11½ 194 4.50  FINAL GRADE 6.3

**NFL comparison:** Rashean Mathis, Jaguars

**Strengths:** Has good size. Shows the quickness and agility to be productive in all coverages. Seems to enjoy playing physical; jams receivers aggressively and slows their release.

**Weaknesses:** Is not an elite athlete; will struggle to stay with NFL receivers out of sharp cuts. Lacks

explosiveness. Is more effective defending passes in front of him than deep throws.

**Bottom line:** Lee, a backup at Auburn before his senior season, climbed up draft boards in 2007. He plays with the tough, physical style NFL teams covet and has the tools to become an elite starter.

## 14 JUSTIN KING\*

PENN STATE

6-0 186 4.50

FINAL GRADE 6.0

**NFL comparison:** Daven Holly, Browns

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, agility and athleticism NFL teams look for. Displays the speed to run with any receiver downfield. Changes direction quickly to adjust in coverage. Shows good hands to make tough interceptions.

**Weaknesses:** Does not consistently close quickly on passes, hindering his ability to play the ball. Fails to play with passion.

**Bottom line:** King's production level dropped significantly last year compared to 2006. On film, he looks small and does not play with the strength to consistently cover big, physical receivers. King has the tools to be an NFL starter, but must improve his backpedal.

## 4TH ROUND

## 15 TRACY PORTER

INDIANA

5-10½ 184 4.45

FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a great athlete with rare quickness, agility and speed for such a tall cornerback. Has the long arms and body control to reach in front of receivers and break up passes without committing penalties. Stays with fast receivers on deep routes. Shows great hands to make tough interceptions.

**Weaknesses:** Is a better athlete than football player; gets by relying on athleticism instead of technique. Allows completions on passes he should break up. Does not always compete hard; often gets blocked in run support.

**Bottom line:** Porter has the athleticism to be an NFL starter, but needs time to improve his technique. He had an excellent week at the Senior Bowl, practicing with an intensity not seen in college. Porter projects as a good nickel corner who could also contribute as a kickoff return man.

## 16 JUSTIN TRYON

ARIZONA STATE

5-9½ 185 4.42

FINAL GRADE 5.8

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete and makes plays in all types of coverage. Enjoys bump-and-run coverage, delivering hard jams to receivers. Is tough and competitive. Comes up quickly in run support and is a willing tackler. Has experience as a return man.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and struggles against tall receivers, especially in the red zone. Tends to get overaggressive when tackling, lunging at ballcarriers instead of wrapping up.

**Bottom line:** A number of NFL teams will remove Tryon from their draft boards because he is under 5-10. At the East-West Shrine Game practices, Tryon flashed the tools to become a solid NFL starter, although he will need a couple years of seasoning.

## 17 JACK WILLIAMS

KENT STATE

5-9 189 4.36

FINAL GRADE 5.8

**Strengths:** Is intense and tough. Has elite speed to



## SKILL SET

### BEST IN MAN COVERAGE

Mike Jenkins > South Florida

Jenkins has the height, long arms and athleticism to not only blanket a receiver in man coverage, but also push enough to re-route him and throw off his timing.

### BEST IN PRESS TECHNIQUE

Jack Ikegwuonu > Wisconsin

Ikegwuonu is excellent at jolting a receiver upright and backwards with an initial punch, which slows up the wideout's release so much that the timing is off and he often quits on the route.

### BEST IN ZONE COVERAGE

Brandon Flowers > Virginia Tech

Flowers' technique enables him to take advantage of his excellent instincts to immediately close in and break up passes in front of him.

### TOUGHEST AGAINST THE RUN

Leslie Majors > Indiana

He may not be an elite cornerback prospect, but Majors flies up the field on running plays and consistently makes hard hits and tackles close to the line.

### PLAYMAKING POTENTIAL

Zackary Bowman > Nebraska

If Bowman shows he's fully recovered from a 2006 torn ACL, he will become an elite cornerback in the NFL.

cover receivers downfield and gets high to break up passes. Uses his body well to cut off and shield receivers from the ball. Shows the tools to be a dangerous kickoff returner.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and struggles to tackle big ballcarriers. If he allows separation downfield, Williams struggles to consistently recover. Gets overpowered by big receivers.

**Bottom line:** Williams struggled through a difficult senior year. He severely sprained both ankles (with ligament damage) during the season, but played through the injuries. He should become an excellent No. 3 cornerback and solid spot starter in the NFL.

## 18 ZACKARY BOWMAN

NEBRASKA

6-0½ 196 4.50

FINAL GRADE 5.5

**Strengths:** Has excellent size and long arms to break up passes. Is physical in coverage; jolts receivers at the line and pushes them off routes.

Shows great instincts to adjust and make plays on the ball. Has good hands. Against the run, he is aggressive and a physical tackler.

**Weaknesses:** Is a medical risk after tearing his ACL in 2006 and then the patellar tendon in his other knee last year. Lacks experience. Has the talent to make more plays than he does. Is not always aggressive and gets blocked too easily.

**Bottom line:** Injuries have derailed Bowman. However, he still has the ideal size and strength to become a shutdown corner, and a smart NFL team will gamble on him in the fourth or fifth round.

## 5TH ROUND

## 19 DWIGHT LOWERY

SAN JOSE STATE

5-11½ 196 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Shows rare athleticism and quickness for a tall cornerback. Has long arms and good instincts. Can reach in front of receivers to break up passes or cut in front of them for interceptions.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks an explosive burst. When playing zone coverage, he reads the play correctly but is too late to play the ball. Does not come up quickly or aggressively in run support.

**Bottom line:** Lowery allows way too many catches to inferior receivers. He was one of the more athletic cornerbacks at the East-West Shrine Game, but isn't a playmaker worthy of a high draft choice.

## 20 JONATHAN ZENON

LSU

6-0 178 4.54

FINAL GRADE 5.3

**Strengths:** Is physical with receivers, jamming them at the line and re-routing them with ease. Shows good instincts to read the quarterback and close in a flash to play the ball. Stays with most receivers downfield and shows the leaping ability to fight for and intercept high passes.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite speed and closing burst. Is not aggressive in run support.

**Bottom line:** Zenon will cause major debates in NFL draft rooms. Teams that play a lot of man-to-man coverage will drop him way down their boards, while teams that use a lot of cover-2 zones will rate him higher. Zenon has the talent to be a good NFL backup, but his lack of speed exposes him.

## 21 CHARLES GODFREY

IOWA

5-11½ 207 4.35

FINAL GRADE 5.3

**Strengths:** Shows quickness, agility and closing burst. Has ideal height and long arms. Is tough, aggressive and delivers hard hits immediately after the catch. Maintains good balance to make fundamentally sound tackles in the open field.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent and shows raw technique. Lacks recovery speed. Usually doesn't arrive in time to play the ball.

**Bottom line:** Godfrey has the athleticism to be an NFL starter, but likely won't develop the consistency to play at that level. He projects more as a solid backup and is worth a late-round gamble.

## 22 LESLIE MAJORS

INDIANA

5-9½ 165 4.53

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is tough and seems to enjoy tackling.

Reaches in front of receivers to break up passes. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage, closing quickly to break up or intercept passes. Also shows the speed to be a good kickoff returner.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the burst to recover from false steps, as well as ball awareness when his back is to the quarterback in man-to-man coverage.

**Bottom line:** Majors has all the tools (except height) that NFL scouts seek, but must improve his footwork. He projects as a solid backup who contributes mostly on special teams.

### 23 TERRANCE WHEATLEY

> COLORADO

► 5-9 1/2 187 4.50

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete, with the quickness, agility and speed NFL teams covet. Displays loose hips and foot quickness to turn and run with receivers. Shows the skills to play the ball and break up passes. Is at his best in man-to-man coverage, staying with receivers all over the field.

**Weaknesses:** Is short and lacks toughness. Does not play with intensity. Shows questionable tackling technique, and lacks the size and strength to tackle big ballcarriers. Is a durability risk after three surgeries on one wrist.

**Bottom line:** Wheatley's size and unwillingness to tackle is a big concern. Although he has the athletic ability to be a starter, Wheatley will likely struggle to be more than a nickel back. There is also a reasonable chance he might not pass a physical.

### 6TH ROUND

### 24 TRAE WILLIAMS

> SOUTH FLORIDA

► 5-9 1/4 193 4.50

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is tough and competitive, showing the willingness to make hard hits. Reads the quarterback well in zone coverage and transitions well to close quickly on passes in front of him.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite athleticism to stay with receivers in and out of cuts in man-to-man coverage. Doesn't have ideal height.

**Bottom line:** Williams is the "other cornerback" from South Florida; although a solid prospect, he is not in the same class as teammate Mike Jenkins. However, there's still a lot to like about Williams, who should become a solid NFL backup.

### 7TH ROUND

### 25 WILREY FONTENOT

> ARIZONA

► 5-9 1/4 174 4.45

Z FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Plays with good awareness, intelligence and instincts. Changes direction quickly to close on the ball. Shows elite speed to cover receivers downfield. Plays the ball well and is competitive.

**Weaknesses:** Is short, and his lack of bulk is an even bigger concern. Gets in position to make plays, but then is often outmuscled or outjumped. Is a liability in run support.

**Bottom line:** Fontenot is quick and fast, but lacks the size to be a top-line NFL cornerback. He will struggle to be more than a bottom-of-the-roster player or practice-squad member.

### 26 D.J. WOLFE

> OKLAHOMA

► 5-10 1/4 200 4.60

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is quick, fast and athletic. Makes plays against the run and pass. Once deep in coverage, reads the quarterback to play the ball. Shows the speed to stuff running backs near the sideline.

## IN PROFILE

### MIKE JENKINS

SOUTH FLORIDA

It speaks volumes about how far the University of South Florida football program has come that Mike Jenkins declined an invite to January's Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

It's not uncommon for top NFL Draft prospects to skip the game, not wanting to risk injury or a poor performance. Virginia defensive end Chris Long and LSU defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey were among several blue-chippers to sit out this year.

Jenkins tweaked a hamstring shortly before the Senior Bowl while training for the NFL Combine and didn't want to be evaluated at less than 100 percent. But it wasn't that long ago when South Florida players gladly would have appeared in full-body casts.

The school didn't play its first football game until 1997, wasn't a member of a Division I-A conference until 2003 and rarely has had a player invited to the Senior Bowl. That was before 2007, when the Bulls became the most unlikely story in college football, starting the season 6-0, advancing to as high as No. 2 in the polls and finishing 9-4.

Jenkins, a three-year starter, almost certainly will become the highest-drafted player in Bulls history, ahead of Giants linebacker Kawika Mitchell, who was selected in the second round in 2003 by the Kansas City Chiefs.

Jenkins' combination of size (6-0, 200 pounds) and speed has attracted NFL scouts, who believe that while he doesn't do anything exceptionally well, he doesn't have any glaring weaknesses.

"He's a true lockdown corner," says Troy Douglas, who coaches

USF's defensive backs. "You put Mike out there and you can be confident that the other team's best receiver is going to be taken out of the game. He's a first-round talent."

Jenkins was one of the Bulls' first big recruits, opting to stay close to home and turning down offers from Auburn and Nebraska. Fabian Washington, a fellow Bradenton, Fla., product and now a cornerback for the Oakland Raiders, urged Jenkins to follow him to Nebraska. Others told Jenkins he would be making a mistake going to a new program rather than a proven commodity.

Kathy Gray, Jenkins' mother, was dealing with diabetes complications during his senior year of high school, so he chose to remain close by to help her and his younger brother, Ciyon. During his freshman season, Bulls coach Jim Leavitt allowed Jenkins to return to Bradenton frequently.

"Mike is an amazing talent who works hard and has overcome a lot to become the player he is today," Leavitt says.

When Jenkins committed to USF, the school had just announced it was joining the Big East for 2005. By the time he finished his career, the Bulls had beaten Auburn, along with getting three wins over top-10 teams (Louisville in 2005 and West Virginia in 2006 and '07), and regularly played under the Big East national TV spotlight on weekday nights.

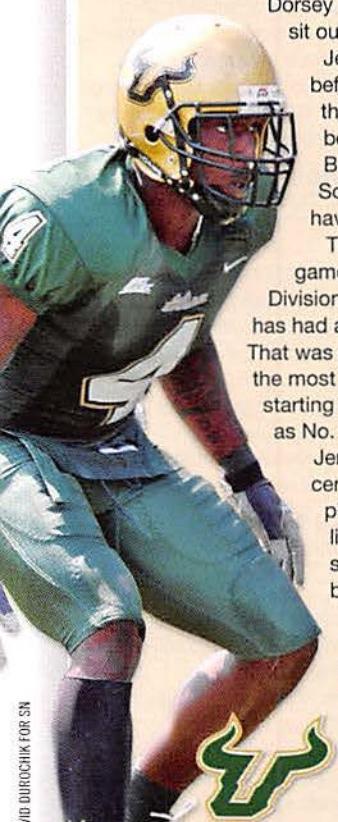
"My decision came down to whether I wanted to be part of an upcoming program or be part of something that's already established," Jenkins says. "As it turned out, I ended up at a big-time program in terms of who we played and how we played. I don't think anyone can say anything about the quality of competition we faced."

As a sophomore in 2005, Jenkins chased down Miami tight end Greg Olsen (who now plays for the Chicago Bears) and stripped the ball, leading to a touchback. Last season, Jenkins again showcased his speed by returning a kickoff 100 yards for a touchdown against Cincinnati.

Now Jenkins could be the top cornerback drafted, ahead of corners from powerhouses such as USC and Oklahoma.

"Guys told me that if I went to South Florida I'd never be able to go in the first or second round of the draft," Jenkins says. "My goal was to prove that it doesn't matter where you go to college, but as it turned out this was the best place to show what I can do."

—Pete Williams



DAVID BURCHICK FOR SI

**Weaknesses:** Must learn techniques of a new position, as he played mostly safety in college. Doesn't play with aggression. More often than not, uses poor tackling technique. Will bite on play-action fakes and allow receivers to get behind him.

**Bottom line:** Wolfe rarely makes impact plays and should first be tried at cornerback given his size, toughness, athleticism and speed.

## 27 MATTERIAL RICHARDSON

> ARKANSAS

5-11 190 4.60

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is tough and enjoys tackling and playing physical in man-to-man coverage. Reads the quarterback quickly, and can plant, drive and close quickly to break up passes.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent and not polished. Once receivers get by him, he lacks the burst and speed to catch up.

**Bottom line:** While Richardson could be drafted higher because he plays physical and enjoys tackling (which are both uncommon for cornerbacks), his footwork is raw and he lacks explosiveness. Richardson could develop into a quality backup and special teams contributor.

## 28 KENNARD COX

> PITTSBURGH

6-0 1/2 193 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Displays quick footwork, especially for a tall cornerback. When playing "off" coverage, he is surprisingly effective at coming up and disrupting the receiver's pattern. Has the size and strength to be a good tackler when working hard.

**Weaknesses:** Is a better athlete than a football player. Fails to come up quickly in run support and does not seem interested in tackling.

**Bottom line:** Cox has the tools to be much more productive than he was in college. A likely late-round flier, he has a chance to stick as a backup and special teams player.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 29 MARTEL VAN ZANT

> OKLAHOMA STATE

6-1 205 4.55

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is tough and does not hesitate to come up and deliver hard hits in run support. Shows the speed to stay with most receivers downfield. Could also play safety.

**Weaknesses:** Needs a ton of work on fundamentals. Shows a raw, choppy backpedal, hindering his ability to make quick cuts. Does not play the ball often; usually goes for the hard hit.

**Bottom line:** Van Zant proved a lot of doubters wrong by overcoming deafness to compete in the classroom and on the football field. He could be a free-agent pickup who becomes a good backup and excels on special teams.

### 30 JIMMIE SUTTON

> N.C. STATE

5-10 180 4.60

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is competitive against the run. Shows good hands and leaping ability to intercept passes.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit of a straight-line athlete. Gets pushed around by physical receivers and struggles to tackle big ballcarriers.

**Bottom line:** Sutton has what it takes to be a good

## DRAFT STATUS

### ON THE RISE

#### Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie >

Tennessee State

For a cornerback who was viewed by many scouts as an underachiever on film, he stepped up and had an outstanding week at the Senior Bowl.

### ON THE DECLINE

#### DeJuan Tribble > Boston College

Tribble went to the Senior Bowl expected to prove he was a definite first-round pick, but struggled all week and could now slip as low as the third round.

### SLEEPER

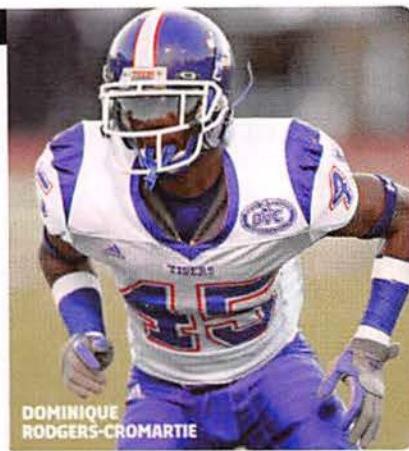
#### Jack Williams > Kent State

He struggled through an injury-plagued senior season, but Williams is a very good athlete with top-notch speed.

### UNREALIZED POTENTIAL

#### Zackary Bowman > Nebraska

After his 2005 season, Bowman was viewed as the top prospect, but has been severely hampered with knee issues over the last two years.



DOMINIQUE  
RODGERS-CROMARTIE

### BIGGEST RISK

#### Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie >

Tennessee State

Although he is also listed above due to his great week in Mobile, Ala., our scouts never thought he was a good player at Tennessee State and believe major improvement is needed in order for him to become a solid NFL player.

NFL backup cornerback and should also be productive on special teams, given his willingness to come up and make tackles.

## 31 ANTWAUN MOLDEN

> EASTERN KENTUCKY

6-0 3/4 196 4.54

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has good size and long arms. Plays under control and with good balance. Shows quick footwork and moves well laterally in the open field. Is a tough, solid tackler.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks strength, and delivers weak jams. Is late to play the ball because of poor awareness and instincts. Gets beat deep.

**Bottom line:** Molden looks the part, but isn't worth a draft pick. He tries to get by on his natural ability more than fundamentals, but must improve his technique to play in the NFL.

## 32 TREY BROWN

> UCLA

5-8 1/2 189 4.55

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is tough and instinctive, making more plays than expected. Reads the quarterback by looking at the receiver. Shows good ball skills to break up passes. Comes up fast in run support, fighting through blocks. Is a willing tackler.

**Weaknesses:** Shows sloppy footwork to consistently stay with receivers out of sharp cuts, especially on quick out routes. Is not a fundamentally sound tackler and lacks good size.

**Bottom line:** Brown plays with rare aggressiveness, but most corners his size struggle to make it in the NFL. If Brown significantly improves his footwork, he could be a good special teams player and backup.

## 33 PAUL PRATT

> NEVADA

5-8 1/2 184 4.35

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows world-class speed, and is tough. Displays good quickness and leaping ability.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks natural hands, as well as the size and strength to jam receivers. Gets knocked around downfield.

**Bottom line:** Pratt is not the best football player, but will get a shot in the NFL because he can flat-out fly. He's likely to start on special teams.

## 34 PATRICK WELLS

> FERRIS STATE

5-11 1/4 194 4.50

FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Has good size and speed, along with experience at safety. Is a solid tackler who's not afraid to mix it up. Does well in bump-and-run coverage. Able to catch passes with ease.

**Weaknesses:** Shows poor instincts and struggles to read plays correctly; gets beaten more often because of missed assignments than lack of talent.

**Bottom line:** Wells should get a shot in training camp because of his athletic ability, but has a long way to go as a player. He could be a great special teams contributor, however.

## 35 TRAVIS WILLIAMS

> EAST CAROLINA

5-9 1/2 181 4.55

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Is willing to get into receivers' faces at the line of scrimmage and work hard in bump-and-run coverage. Challenges receivers on jump balls.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks strength and size. Gets caught peeking into the backfield, giving up big plays behind him. Lacks the short burst to make plays on the ball. Is not much help in run support.

**Bottom line:** Williams should receive an NFL training camp invite, but will struggle to make a roster.

## 36 GLENN SHARPE

> MIAMI (FLA.)

6-0 185 4.45

FINAL GRADE 3.6

**Strengths:** Has good size. Shows the speed to cover downfield routes and has an explosive closing burst on passes in front of him.

**Weaknesses:** Shows little interest in helping in run support. Is a durability risk.

**Bottom line:** Sharpe showed a lot of potential before knee and hamstring injuries waylaid him the last three years. If he's able to pass a physical, Sharpe is a solid free-agent pickup.

2008 CLASS GRADE:

**B-**

**A**s opposed to last year, the 2008 draft lacks quality depth among safeties. The top duo, Miami's Kenny Phillips and N.C. State's DaJuan Morgan, compare with the first two taken in the 2007 NFL Draft (LaRon Landry and Michael Griffin). Beyond that, however, the field is limited.

Phillips and Morgan are both underclassmen, which shows how talented the two are, considering safety is a position where veteran college players usually dominate the draft. Their playing styles are also very similar, as both have the valuable versatility to be impact players against the run and in pass coverage. Although they both still make some mistakes due to being overaggressive, much of it is due to their youth and they should improve in time. The belief here is that both Phillips and Morgan will challenge for starting jobs as rookies and end up as NFL starters for years to come.

The next two safety prospects, California's Thomas DeCoud and Tennessee's Jonathan Hefney, may get overlooked by many teams. DeCoud is a tall and lanky safety who can fly under the radar at times, but possesses athleticism and versatility. Hefney has the ability to fly around the field with great passion and intensity, but his size may keep him from going early.

One player who is almost certain to be drafted higher than he should is Notre Dame's Tom Zbikowski. While Zbikowski is a tough and highly competitive safety who plays with energy and passion, he often comes across as a straight-line athlete and one-dimensional—solid against the run but a liability in pass coverage.

## JOB REQUIREMENTS

	Ht.	Wt.	40
NFL Optimum	6-2	220	4.45
NFL Minimum	5-10	190	5.65

Teams used to want big, physical safeties who played the run and muscled receivers off routes. Now that offenses use more multiple-receiver sets and motion to create mismatches, teams prefer safeties who are physical but have better coverage skills. The best free safeties can cover a lot of ground and make plays on the ball when it is in the air. Safeties who can play the strong and free positions are becoming more common.

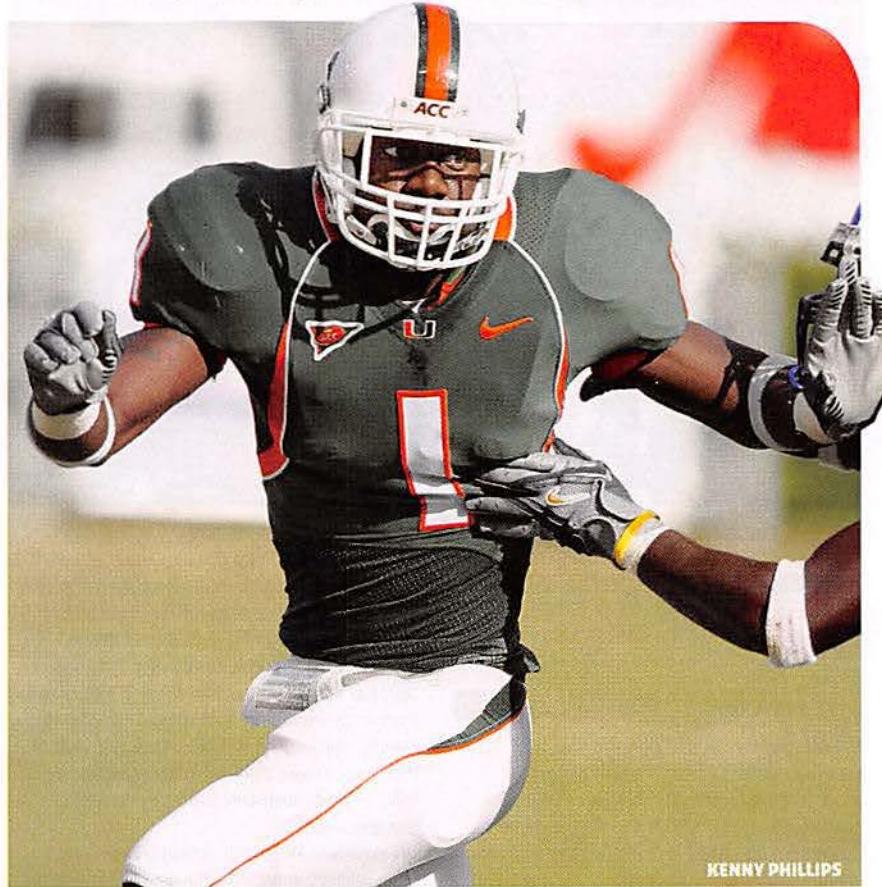
## 2007 DRAFT

SAFETIES TAKEN: 14

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	3	3	1	3	3	0	1

# SAFETIES

**Two underclassmen should be immediate starters, but questions surround others**



KENNY PHILLIPS

## 1ST ROUND

### 1 KENNY PHILLIPS\*

&gt; MIAMI (FLA.)

TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2005	40	27	1
2006	39	15	4
2007	54	28	2

6-2 202 4.50 FINAL GRADE: 8.0

NFL comparison: Deon Grant, Seahawks

**Arm strength:** Is good at reading the quarterback from deep coverage. Shows the acceleration and speed to help cornerbacks over the top. Gets to the receiver quickly to break up the pass or make the interception. Reads passes in front of him well. Jolts receivers. Shows the quickness, agility, hip movement and speed to cover tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Can reach around the receiver to break up passes. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run/pass recognition:** Is instinctive. Reads and reacts quickly, using explosive acceleration and

speed to make plays. At times is overaggressive; bites on play-action fakes and allows receivers to get behind him. Recovers well, though. **Grade: 7.5**

**Closing speed:** Shows an explosive closing burst against the pass or run. Uses elite pursuit speed to run down ballcarriers and stay with receivers downfield. **Grade: 8.0**

**Ball skills:** Combines natural ability and athleticism to break up passes. Gets up to intercept high passes along the sideline. **Grade: 8.0**

**Run support:** Is aggressive; moves through traffic with ease, takes good angles, closes fast and makes strong, physical tackles. Combines quick reads, acceleration and speed to reach sidelines. Is an aggressive tackler and stays balanced. **Grade: 8.5**

**Bottom line:** Phillips has the physical tools to be drafted high in the first round. He is the uncommon safety prospect who is equally adept in pass coverage and run support. Phillips will start early in his NFL career and make a ton of impact plays.

\* Denotes underclassman

**How SAFETIES are graded:** Man coverage: Hips and turns, pedal and acceleration. Zone coverage: Range, covers ground, deep half, awareness. Closing quickness: Plant and drive, gets to the ball in the air. Key and diagnose: Reads the quarterback, anticipates, in the right spot. Lateral pursuit: Gets over trash, hips, sideline chase. Tackling: Wraps up, physical, drags down, solid technique. Pass drop: Hips and turns, deep zone coverage.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-4.5—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.

DaJUAN MORGAN



## 2 DaJUAN MORGAN\*

&gt; N.C. STATE

TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
PLAYED ON OFFENSE			
2004			
2005			
2006			
2007			
6-1 200 4.55			

FINAL GRADE 8.0

**NFL comparison:** Sean Jones, Browns**Coverage skills:** Combines athleticism, speed and instincts to be effective in all areas. Reads quarterbacks well in solo or two-deep alignment. Delivers big hits. Stays with receivers well on seam routes. **Grade: 7.5****Run/pass recognition:** Is instinctive; reads and reacts quickly. Isn't fooled by play-action fakes or misdirection. Can help cornerbacks with over-the-top sideline coverage. Flies into flats to tackle running backs on screen passes. **Grade: 8.0****Closing speed:** Shows an explosive burst to finish plays. Reaches full speed fast and recovers well in coverage. Pursues ballcarriers well. **Grade: 8.0****Ball skills:** Makes plays to break up passes or intercept them if in position. Shows the hands and concentration to catch tipped passes. **Grade: 7.5****Run support:** Flies to ballcarrier to make tackles, but must become more consistent. Moves through traffic well, finds target, takes good angles and has a good finishing burst. **Grade: 8.0****Bottom line:** Morgan will be equally valuable against the run and in coverage. He fits the new profile of being interchangeable in the strong and free safety roles.

## 3RD ROUND

## 3 THOMAS DeCoud

&gt; CALIFORNIA

TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2004	6	3	0
2005	18	10	0
2006	20	25	0
2007	71	45	1
6-1 1/2 196 4.57			

FINAL GRADE 6.9

**Weaknesses:** Is short. Lacks the bulk to make strong tackles. Is a durability risk. Could struggle in covering tall tight ends and receivers. Is a cornerback/safety 'tweener. Does not consistently attack the run; often seems content to wait for teammates to make the tackle. Misses too many open-field tackles; too often goes for the highlight hit instead of the fundamental tackle.**Bottom line:** Hefney is sure to stir debate in every NFL draft room: Is he a safety or cornerback? Hefney could become a quality starter at either, but initially should be tried at safety. His versatility and productivity would increase with better tackling.

## 4TH ROUND

## 5 SIMEON CASTILLE

&gt; ALABAMA

	TACKLES	ASSISTS	INT	PD
2004	7	7	2	6
2005	18	10	2	9
2006	44	27	6	6
2007	40	23	2	10

5-11 1/8 190 4.66

FINAL GRADE 5.9

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with quick footwork and deceptive speed. Shows good instincts to read plays quickly and react. Gets upfield quickly and aggressively in run support, and is an open-field tackler with good fundamentals.**Weaknesses:** Primarily played cornerback in college and will need time to adjust to safety. Lacks explosiveness and elite speed. Is thin, and could struggle to tackle running backs without more bulk. Shows raw and sloppy footwork in his backpedal, hindering his ability to turn and run smoothly with receivers.**Bottom line:** Castille, an All-SEC cornerback, will have to move to safety in the NFL. His mental toughness, aggressiveness and willingness to be physical in coverage and run support are impressive. If Castille can smoothly make the transition, he has all the intangibles to become a good starter who could help cover slot receivers.

## 6 D.J. PARKER

&gt; VIRGINIA TECH

5-11 1/4 190 4.61

FINAL GRADE 5.7

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with the quickness, speed and closing burst to make plays sideline-to-sideline. In zone coverage, he reads the quarterback well to break quickly and close in time to disrupt the pass or deliver a hard hit. Flashes aggressiveness in run support. When maintaining good balance, he can be a solid open-field tackler.**Weaknesses:** Does not consistently use good technique to wrap up and finish tackles. Tends to stop moving his feet and lunge at the ballcarrier. Does not always fly upfield in run support.**Bottom line:** Parker is solid, but does not make game-changing plays. He should develop into a solid starter whose athleticism and coverage skills will allow his defensive coordinator to limit switching to nickel personnel.

## 5TH ROUND

## 7 DENNIS KEYES

&gt; UCLA

6-1 201 4.55

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Is instinctive. Reads and reacts quickly,

chasing down plays all over the field. Reaches full speed quickly. Shows the speed and closing burst to finish plays. Moves through traffic easily. Reads the quarterback well. Doesn't hesitate to break up passes with hard hits. Shows ball skills to break up deep, outside passes. Uses his body to shield receivers from the pass.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles in man-to-man coverage. Lacks flexibility and hip movement to be consistent. Shows bad tackling technique; tends to dive or lunge too often. Makes too many shoestring tackles.

**Bottom line:** Keyes is a high energy and competitive safety who makes tackles all over the field. While stiff and limited athletically, he overcomes problems with his speed, closing burst and instincts. Keyes fits best as a No. 3 safety and special teams star, but could also become a starter.

## 8 QUINTIN DEMPS

> UTEP

5-11 $\frac{3}{4}$  203 4.55  FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Shows agility to backpedal and transition quickly to plant, drive and close from deep coverage. When in position, he reaches in front of receivers to break up passes. Makes strong open-field tackles when staying under control.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks consistency and top-end athleticism. Doesn't always come up quickly in run support, seemingly content for teammates to make tackles. Lacks elite speed to stay with receivers in man-to-man coverage downfield.

**Bottom line:** Demps has the talent to become a good starting safety if he becomes consistently aggressive. He can also be a fine special teams contributor.

## 9 JAMAR ADAMS

> MICHIGAN

6-2 $\frac{1}{4}$  209 4.60  FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Reads and reacts swiftly. Comes up quickly in run support, works through traffic and can be a strong, physical tackler. Attacks the ballcarrier, driving through

to make a hard hit. Drives and closes quickly on passes in front of him. Uses deceptive speed to chase down running backs.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to cover running backs and tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Loses a step out of cuts and lacks the burst to catch up. Doesn't have the speed to help cornerbacks on deep sideline routes. Lacks speed and explosiveness.

**Bottom line:** Adams could struggle in transitioning to the NFL game because of poor hip movement and lack of elite speed. He will be helped by his intelligence, instincts and sound tackling technique. Adams projects as a backup and spot starter.

## 10 DOMINIQUE BARBER

> MINNESOTA

6-0 210 4.55  FINAL GRADE 5.2

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete with quick footwork, loose hip movement, agility and speed. Stays with tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Closes quickly on passes. Shows the ball skills to reach around receivers and break up passes. Is a good open-field tackler when he stays under control and balanced. Combines good instincts and quickness to read and react quickly. Times blitzes well; can fool the quarterback and get through the line.

**Weaknesses:** Must become more consistent. Stops his feet right before tackles, lunging to reach the ballcarrier. Doesn't fight through blocks well. Is inconsistent in helping cornerbacks with help on deep sideline routes.

**Bottom line:** Barber is athletic, has the tools to improve and is often around the ball, but doesn't make game-changing plays. He has better physical skills than most safeties, so Barber could be a versatile starter with improvement in coverage and tackling. For now, pencil him in as a backup safety.

## 11 CRAIG STELTZ

> LSU

6-1 $\frac{1}{4}$  210 4.61  FINAL GRADE 5.1

**Strengths:** Is smart and shows good instincts to

read plays correctly and react in a flash. Plays faster than his timed speed would indicate. Comes up quickly in run support, takes good angles to the ballcarrier and makes strong and physical tackles in the open field. Sits back comfortably in deep zone coverage, reading the quarterback and closing quickly to break up passes with his hands or with a hard hit.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite athleticism and speed to stay with the fastest tight ends. Doesn't have the speed to recover from a false step. Struggles to make interceptions.

**Bottom line:** Initially, Steltz appeared to be a classic overachiever lacking NFL physical skills. But upon further study of LSU game film, he proved to be an underrated athlete with the tools to be a pro safety. Steltz will be a special teams player and backup safety early, but eventually will start.

## 12 MARCUS GRIFFIN

> TEXAS

5-10 $\frac{1}{4}$  198 4.50  FINAL GRADE 5.1

**Strengths:** Is well built with good athletic ability. Gets to full speed fast, has sideline-range speed and shows an explosive closing burst to finish plays. Is good at reading the quarterback's eyes, helping him plant, drive and close quickly on passes coming at him.

**Weaknesses:** Is not consistently aggressive. Too often sits back and waits for plays to come to him. Can be a non-factor in run support. Is more of a hitter than tackler. Tends to dive or lunge at his target, missing too many tackles.

**Bottom line:** Marcus is the brother of Titans safety Michael Griffin, who had a strong rookie season in 2007. However, NFL teams should be wary of making comparisons. Marcus won't make a major impact in the pros because he isn't aggressive. He is best suited to be a backup.

## 13 TONY JOINER

> FLORIDA

6-0 $\frac{1}{4}$  215 4.55  FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is smart, tough and reads plays quickly. Shows quickness and explosiveness in tight spaces. Is good in zone coverage, understanding angles and playing the ball. Can cover running backs and tight ends man-to-man. Reads the quarterback well, and gets a good jump on passes. Shows good hands and ball skills. Leaps to catch passes at their highest point. Is an outstanding tackler, finishing with aggression.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks the speed to cover receivers man-to-man. Displays limited range.

**Bottom line:** Joiner is an in-the-box safety who plays more like a linebacker. He may never become an NFL starter, but could be a Day 2 pick who contributes on special teams.

## 14 TOM ZBIKOWSKI

> NOTRE DAME

5-11 $\frac{3}{4}$  209 4.50  FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is tough and attacks every play. Does not hesitate to launch into bigger runners and blockers. Accelerates to full speed quickly. Closes quickly on passes in front of him. Covers tight ends and running backs nicely on short routes. Is a dangerous return man who is a threat to score on every touch.

**Weaknesses:** Is too much of a straight-line athlete. Struggles to reach downfield passes along the



### BIGGEST RISK

**Tom Zbikowski > Notre Dame**

He has a much bigger reputation than his on-field play deserves and could struggle to become a quality starter.

sidelines. Has trouble staying with wide receivers in man-to-man coverage. Takes bad angles to the ball at times and lacks the agility to adjust and make the tackle. Is not a fundamentally sound tackler.

**Bottom line:** Aside from being an interesting safety prospect, Zbikowski is also an aspiring professional boxer. He is well built and aggressive, but does not always stay under control and must greatly improve his tackling skills to be a trusted NFL safety. Zbikowski will be drafted higher than he deserves and struggle to meet expectations. He projects as a quality backup whose biggest impact will come as a return man.

## 6TH ROUND

### 15 NEHEMIAH WARRICK

> MICHIGAN STATE

► 6-1 $\frac{1}{2}$  208 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is a good athlete. Against the run, is physical and strong at the point of attack. Shows good short-area burst to close quickly on ballcarriers. Is tough and competitive. Has outstanding speed, and covers a lot of ground with a smooth stride. Is strong enough to play the ball in traffic.

**Weaknesses:** Does not play smart and takes poor angles to the ball. Misses tackles going for the big hit instead of the sure tackle. Gives up big plays by making bad reads. Struggles in deep coverage. Gets lazy in man-to-man coverage. Shows marginal hands, breaking up passes instead of intercepting them.

**Bottom line:** Warrick is the physical type of safety coaches covet, showing the speed and range to make plays all over the field. However, he has awful instincts. Warrick will get drafted late because of his off-the-charts athletic ability and potential.

### 16 TYRELL JOHNSON

> ARKANSAS STATE

► 5-11 $\frac{1}{2}$  196 4.53

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Is aggressive. Recognizes plays easily and attacks the ball. Really shines playing near the line of scrimmage. Moves well through traffic. Takes good angles to the ball and shows a good understanding of containment responsibilities.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks explosiveness and speed. Must dramatically improve tackling technique and man-to-man coverage skills. Doesn't show good hands. Once blocked, he tends to quit on the play.

**Bottom line:** Johnson has many of the skills that translate well to the NFL. He fits best on a team in need of a run-stuffing safety and is projected as a backup.

## 7TH ROUND

### 17 CALEB CAMPBELL

> ARMY

► 6-1 $\frac{1}{2}$  223 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Is built well. Accelerates to full speed quickly to chase down running backs. Reads quick passes in front of him, closes quickly and makes the hard hit right after the catch.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks good, all-around athleticism. Doesn't have the burst to catch up once beaten. Does not consistently attack the play in run support. Is driven out of the play too easily.

**Bottom line:** Campbell grabs attention with his ability to chase ballcarriers and make hard hits. But he struggles against the run and is a

disappointment in coverage. Campbell could challenge for a starting job or be moved to outside linebacker in a Tampa-2 defense.

### 18 HENTI BAIRD

> HAMPTON

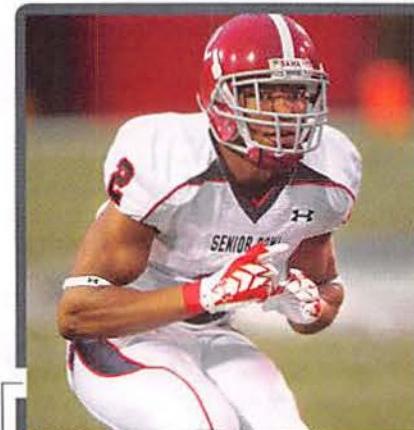
► 6-1 $\frac{1}{2}$  204 4.45

FINAL GRADE 4.4

**Strengths:** Shows great speed and quickness. Is flexible and can flip his hips to make cuts with ease. Understands coverage responsibilities. Shows good range to make plays along the sideline. Tracks the ball well and shows good hands. Easily covers tight ends and running backs in man-to-man coverage.

**Weaknesses:** Struggles to plant and drive without taking an extra step. Is not a hard hitter. Does not take good angles to the ball, relying too much on his speed to recover from mistakes. Bites hard on play-action fakes. Must learn to read quarterbacks and routes better while in zone coverage.

**Bottom line:** Baird, originally an outside linebacker, shifted to safety before his senior season and is still learning the nuances of the position. He is a good athlete, but needs a ton of work on fundamentals. Baird is worthy of a late-round pick as a developmental prospect.



## SKILL SET

### BEST IN MAN COVERAGE

Thomas DeCoud > California

DeCoud is a tall and athletic safety who can cover tight ends and receivers easily.

### BEST IN ZONE COVERAGE

Kenny Phillips > Miami (Fla.)

Phillips reads the quarterback quickly, closes fast and is consistently around the ball to break up passes in zone coverage.

### BEST PRESS TECHNIQUE

Simeon Castille > Alabama

Castille's experience as a starting cornerback gives him a big advantage over the other safeties; he jams aggressively and stays with his man all over the field.

### TOUGHEST AGAINST THE RUN

Tyrell Johnson > Arkansas State

Johnson is a very aggressive defender who attacks the line and consistently makes hard tackles on much bigger ballcarriers.

### PLAYMAKING POTENTIAL

Dajuan Morgan > N.C. State

Morgan has shown a knack for consistently being around the ball, and has the hands and coordination to make tough interceptions seem easy.

### 19 TRAVIS KEY

> MICHIGAN STATE

► 5-8 $\frac{1}{2}$  181 4.60

FINAL GRADE 4.3

**Strengths:** Is tough and smart. Gives up his body, and plays bigger than his measured size would suggest. Shows good ability to read plays quickly and react. Is smart and instinctive. Plays best deep in zone coverage, keeping receivers in front of him. Shows good leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Is not a great athlete. Lacks height and bulk. Gets knocked around in run support. Gets beat on jump balls against bigger players on crossing routes. Shows marginal speed and struggles to recover from mistakes.

**Bottom line:** Key likely won't be drafted, but has a chance to stick with a team because of his skills. He compensates for physical shortcomings with smart play. Key should also excel on special teams.

### 20 ROGER WILLIAMS

> FLORIDA STATE

► 5-11 $\frac{1}{2}$  199 4.55

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Despite being a bit short and light, shows the size and strength to deliver violent hits. Is quick, and reads the quarterback well to help cornerbacks defend sideline passes. Shows the quickness and athleticism to cover running backs and tight ends in man-to-man coverage on short routes.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent. Doesn't always fly upfield in run support, and seems content to allow teammates to make tackles. Struggles to consistently fight through blockers. Is a poor tackler.

**Bottom line:** Williams doesn't maintain his focus well enough to maximize his potential. He has the physical skills to compete for a starting job, but his inconsistency leads our scouts to project him as a journeyman who will struggle to find a home. NFL teams should be wary of drafting Williams because most inconsistent college players never become consistent pros.

### 21 KELIN JOHNSON

> GEORGIA

► 6-0 $\frac{1}{2}$  195 4.60

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and gets teammates aligned correctly. Shows the instincts to read plays quickly and react. Comes up quickly in run support to deliver hard hits. Is competitive and chases hard after ballcarriers, making lots of tackles from behind. From two-deep coverage, he reaches the sideline to deliver hard hits or jump the route.

**Weaknesses:** Is overaggressive. Tends to run upright, and thus overruns some tackles. Lacks the quickness, hip movement and speed to turn and run with tight ends in man-to-man coverage.

**Bottom line:** Johnson is tough and competitive, but misses too many tackles. Plus, he just doesn't make many impact plays. He could go undrafted, but should make it in the NFL as a backup.

### 22 NATE LYLES

> VIRGINIA

► 5-10 $\frac{1}{2}$  201 4.75

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is a deceptive athlete, making plays against the run and in coverage. Displays awareness in zone coverage, and pops receivers who catch passes in his area. Comes up quickly in run support to deliver violent hits. Times blitzes well to pressure quarterbacks.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent. Doesn't always maintain balance and stay under control to break

down and tackle. Lacks the burst to catch up after false steps. Doesn't have the bulk or strength to cover stout tight ends.

**Bottom line:** Lyles doesn't jump off the film, but his production, effort and hustle are improving. However, he's not worth a draft pick because he lacks the speed, explosiveness and athleticism to start.

### 23 JAMIE SILVA

&gt; BOSTON COLLEGE

5-11 205 4.75

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Comes up quickly in run support, sometimes delivering hard hits. Takes good angles to the ball. Reads the quarterback well in the passing game, closing quickly on throws in front of him to make the hit as the ball arrives. Breaks to the sideline quick enough to help cornerbacks on downfield routes.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Shows poor tackling technique; tends to launch himself at the ballcarrier and often misses the tackle completely. Doesn't have the burst to recover when beaten.

**Bottom line:** Silva makes more plays than expected because of his instincts, effort and toughness, but he lacks athletic ability. He is a productive special teams player, particularly on coverage units. Silva isn't worth a draft pick, but could develop into a fine backup and special teams player.

### 24 KEVIN MITCHELL

&gt; ILLINOIS

5-11 1/2 210 4.65

FINAL GRADE 4.0

**Strengths:** Is a big-play machine who produces in clutch moments. Always seems to be around the ball and will deliver a big hit. Plays with great toughness and is a good tackler with great technique. Shows leadership skills.

**Weaknesses:** Has only average size, raising concerns about his ability to match up against NFL players. Lacks great speed. Can be inconsistent.

**Bottom line:** Mitchell flies to the ball and doesn't miss tackles, but struggles in most coverage situations. He will need a year or two on the practice squad to make it in the NFL as a backup safety.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

### 25 JOE FIELDS

&gt; SYRACUSE

6-0 3/8 203 4.50

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Reads the play and shows good instincts. Is tough and willing to come up quickly in run support to make hard hits. Reads passes in front of him, closing quickly to make the hit.

**Weaknesses:** Rarely makes impact tackles. Lacks elite speed and closing burst to make plays along the sideline. Does not take good angles to the ball and gets bounced around in traffic. Is an inconsistent tackler; will leave his feet and lunge for the ballcarrier.

**Bottom line:** Fields is well built and knows his assignments, but lacks the athleticism to make game-changing plays. He could stick as a backup safety and special teams contributor.

### 26 KHAYYAM BURNS

&gt; ARKANSAS STATE

6-0 184 4.50

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is physical and always around the ball. Shows good speed. Knows his responsibilities,

## IN PROFILE

### KENNY PHILLIPS

MIAMI (Fla.)

**A**ge has never been a factor for Kenny Phillips. Such was the case again in December, when he declared for the NFL Draft after just three seasons at Miami.

Phillips never redshirted for the Hurricanes. Instead, it took him slightly more than 15 minutes to make an impact in a secondary that has produced seven first-round selections over the last six years, including safeties Ed Reed, Brandon Meriweather and the late Sean Taylor.

In the 2005 season opener at Florida State, free safety Anthony Reddick went down with a knee injury in the second quarter. Phillips stepped in and held his own. The next week against Clemson, he led the team with 13 tackles and made the game-winning interception in triple-overtime. Phillips then was the regular starter at free safety for the next three seasons.

His college career culminated with 95 tackles, two interceptions, three forced fumbles and 6.5 tackles for loss last season, during which opposing quarterbacks often threw the ball away from him. Scouts project him as the top safety in this year's draft class.

Phillips' 6-2, 202-pound frame certainly helped him adapt quickly to the college level. But Walt Frazier, the legendary coach of Miami's Carol City High who recently retired after a 26-year tenure, remembers an unusually intelligent freshman stepping onto his field.

"He was gifted with a lot of natural ability, but he was *smart*," Frazier says, drawing the word out for effect. "He was one of the exceptional kids that had the ability to play the game at a high level mentally and physically."

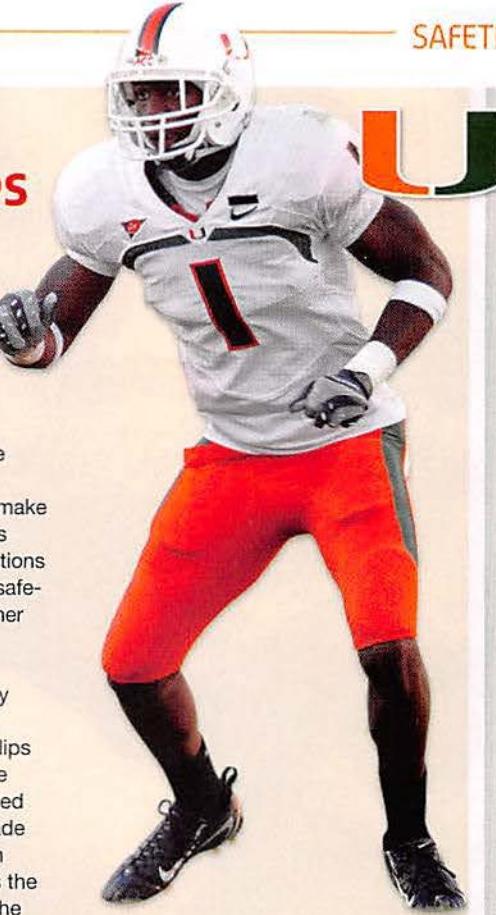
As a 10th-grader, Phillips made the defensive calls in the secondary for the football powerhouse that produced brothers Santana and Sinorice Moss.

"He walked into the place playing well," Frazier says, noting that Phillips

and plays well in zone coverage. Shows a quick backpedal and gets a decent break on the ball. Has good speed and times his blitzes nicely.

**Weaknesses:** Is a poor tackler who must significantly improve his technique. Takes terrible angles to the ball; overruns everything. Shows terrible footwork and is easily juked by ballcarriers.

**Bottom line:** Burns was decent in college, but



also started for the varsity basketball team as a freshman.

Phillips made second-team all-city his sophomore season, first-team all-city and all-state the next year and first-team all-state as a senior. By then, he was the top safety recruit in the nation and USA Today's Defensive Player of the Year. From there, it was off to the University of Miami.

"He probably didn't go in looking at the size of those players and in awe of them," Frazier says. "Many kids have a problem adjusting to the mental differences and the various things they have to learn as a college player—film work and all those kinds of things that tend to grow on kids as they gain experience."

"He was able to do those things, probably going in. Because I know he walked into our place a ninth- and 10th-grader doing [them]. Some people just have a natural instinct."

Some things can't be taught, as the old football adage goes—even in the NFL, where rookies have so much to learn.

—Mike Giglio

has some major drawbacks. He must significantly improve his tackling to land on an NFL roster.

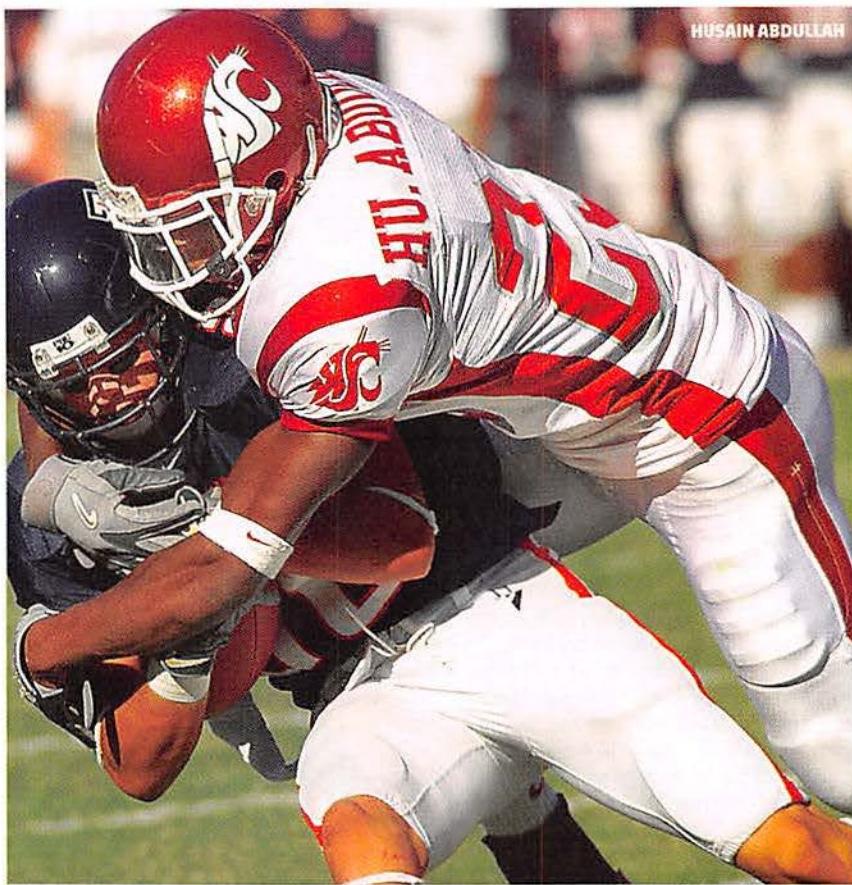
### 27 CHRIS HORTON

&gt; UCLA

6-1 210 4.55

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is smart and consistently reads the play quickly. Attacks the line when blitzing. Takes good



HUSAIN ABDULLAH

angles to the ball and delivers hard hits. Shows sideline range against the run and can chase down ballcarriers. In coverage, reads the quarterback well and closes fast on passes in front of him.

**Weaknesses:** Has trouble helping cornerbacks on deep sideline routes. Struggles to break down and tackle well in the open field.

**Bottom line:** Horton was named a 2007 All-American, but wasn't even the best safety at UCLA. He is basically a one-dimensional player who can be good against the run but is a liability in coverage. If he is able to become a more consistent tackler, Horton could be a backup safety who does a good job on special teams.

## 28 ROGER WILLIAMS ► KENTUCKY

► 5-10 1/2 204 4.55 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is tough and aggressive. Comes up hard in run support. Has good size and strength to tackle big ballcarriers. Shows good instincts in coverage; reads the quarterback well. Plants, drives and closes quickly on passes in front of him. Works hard to the whistle.

**Weaknesses:** Is too much of a straight-line player. Struggles to adjust and tackle well in the open field. Too often goes for the hard hit instead of the sound tackle. Lacks the quickness and athleticism to get outside and help cornerbacks on sideline routes downfield.

**Bottom line:** Williams is tough and competitive, but lacks the athleticism to be an NFL starter. He could be solid on special teams and a backup safety.

## 29 RON GIRAUT

► RUTGERS FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is smart and instinctive. Reads the

quarterback well. Covers slot receivers and tight ends well on short routes.

**Weaknesses:** Is inconsistent. Does not always fly upfield in run support. Struggles to shed blocks.

**Bottom line:** Girault has the talent to play safety in the NFL, but isn't aggressive enough (especially in run support) or a good tackler. He'll struggle to become anything more than a backup.

## 30 ADAM SHADA ► IOWA

► 5-11 1/4 187 4.57 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is tough. Makes hard, physical tackles. Is a smart player who reads plays quickly and reacts. Able to use his speed to get outside and help cornerbacks along the sideline.

**Weaknesses:** Having played cornerback in college, he lacks experience at safety. Doesn't have ideal bulk. Must improve tackling skills in run support.

**Bottom line:** Shada is tough and willing to make physical tackles. He now must learn a new position, which could lead to him being undrafted. Shada could challenge for a spot as a backup who makes most of his impact on special teams.

## 31 HUSAIN ABDULLAH ► WASHINGTON STATE

► 6-0 1/2 198 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is a playmaker. Shows good route-recognition skills, especially in zone coverage. Is aggressive, attacking the ball in the air. Is smart and always in the right place at the right time. Takes proper angles to make open-field tackles. Is a vocal team leader. Makes plays behind the line of scrimmage.

**Weaknesses:** Is a limited athlete. Shows poor man-to-man coverage skills, lacking the explosiveness and speed to recover from missteps. Is

a bit undersized, and must get stronger to play in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Abdullah is adept against the run and as a center fielder in pass coverage. As a senior, he led Washington State in tackles and interceptions. At best, Abdullah projects as a No. 4 safety and solid performer on special teams.

## 32 JOE GARCIA ► TEXAS TECH

► 6-0 1/2 218 4.70 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Is big, versatile and at his best close to the line. Has great intelligence; plays like a coach on the field. Shows good tackling technique.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks athleticism. Struggles to reach top speed to cover receivers or tight ends in man-to-man coverage. Doesn't deliver big hits.

**Bottom line:** Garcia would be best served in a scheme that uses his physical skills to make plays against the run. He is a liability in man-to-man coverage, but solid in zone. Garcia projects as a No. 4 safety and valuable contributor on special teams.

## 33 TIERRE GREEN ► NEBRASKA

► 6-1 195 4.65 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows good instincts to read and react quickly to plays in front of him. Delivers hard hits after the catch. Reads quick dump-off passes to the running back, closes fast and makes the tackle. Hustles and chases after the ball hard in pursuit.

**Weaknesses:** Is a straight-line athlete lacking agility. Does not consistently attack in run support; seems to pick and choose when to come upfield. Lacks an explosive closing burst to catch fast NFL ballcarriers in pursuit. Too often stops his feet and ends up lunging on tackles, missing far too many.

**Bottom line:** Green lacks the athleticism, explosiveness and consistency to be productive in the NFL. He looks the part, but teams should be wary due to his poor tackling ability.

## 34 JAMAL LEWIS ► GEORGIA TECH

► 5-11 1/4 199 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Shows good run/pass recognition skills, especially in center field. Makes big plays to cause turnovers. Is tough and attacks the line in run support.

**Weaknesses:** Lacks elite athleticism. Has average size and speed. Struggles when having to turn and run with receivers in man-to-man coverage.

**Bottom line:** Lewis, originally a cornerback, moved to safety as a senior because of team injuries, which showed his versatility and willingness to be a team player. He'll likely get a free-agent shot as a reserve safety and special teams player.

## 35 COREY LYNCH ► APPALACHIAN STATE

► 6-0 205 4.60 FINAL GRADE 3.7

**Strengths:** Is intelligent and understands his responsibilities as well as those of his teammates. Takes good angles to the ball. Has good size and is physical. Works hard on every snap.

**Weaknesses:** Hasn't faced elite competition. Lacks explosiveness. Must get stronger and improve his tackling technique.

**Bottom line:** Scouts root for players like Lynch. He has the mind to play in the NFL, but not the ideal physical skills. Lynch could become a solid special teams player with improved speed.

# SPECIALISTS

## KICKERS

### 5TH ROUND

#### 1 TAYLOR MEHLHAFF

&gt; WISCONSIN

5-10½ 184 5.05

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Is a strong-minded player who has consistently shown the ability to make clutch field goals in bad weather. Doesn't get rattled by wind or rain, and knows how to adjust to the conditions. Shows a strong leg to hit kicks of 50-plus yards. Gets good distance and hang time on kickoffs.

**Weaknesses:** Is a bit slow addressing the ball. Seems so focused on his footwork and technique that he does not attack the ball.

**Bottom line:** If he's able to speed up his field goal footwork, Mehlhaff has everything it takes to be a good NFL kicker. His experience dealing with bad weather is impressive, which should make him productive for any team.

#### 2 SHANE LONGEST

&gt; SAINT XAVIER

5-10½ 172 5.05

FINAL GRADE 5.0

**Strengths:** Shows big-time leg strength to really smash the ball. On field goal attempts, the ball explodes off his foot and gets high quickly. Makes clutch kicks. Consistently drives kickoffs into the end zone, and could become a real force in the battle to win field position.

**Weaknesses:** Must speed up his field goal footwork. It wasn't a problem at Saint Xavier, but NFL athletes would likely block his kicks.

**Bottom line:** Longest is the best small-school kicking prospect and has the leg strength and explosiveness to become a quality NFL field goal kicker and big-time weapon on kickoffs.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENTS

#### 3 BRANDON COUTU

&gt; GEORGIA

5-11½ 187 5.05

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Hit a number of clutch field goals to win games. Shows the leg strength to make long-distance attempts; the ball jumps off his foot. Has good technique and power to get the ball up quickly upon contact. Is accurate and consistent.

**Weaknesses:** Never showed the leg strength to be Georgia's kickoff man, and could be a roster hindrance if unable to perform those duties in the NFL.

**Bottom line:** Coutu had a solid senior season after recovering from a 2006 hamstring injury. He has a strong leg and is a clutch performer, but many NFL teams will take him off their draft boards because of his struggles on kickoffs.

## 2007 DRAFT

### SPECIALISTS TAKEN: 6

ROUND	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TAKEN	0	0	0	2	1	2	1

#### 4 JEREMY ITO

&gt; RUTGERS

5-10½ 187 5.10

FINAL GRADE 3.9

**Strengths:** Has good experience as a four-year starter and is consistently accurate. Shows a strong leg to hit field goal attempts of 50-plus yards. Has learned to drive the ball through the wind. Is solid on kickoffs, often driving the ball to the goal line on straight-ahead kicks.

**Weaknesses:** Must speed up field goal footwork just a bit to prevent blocked kicks. Needs to improve on directional kickoffs, whether it's trying to kick to a corner or hanging the ball up.

**Bottom line:** Ito was a big part of Rutgers' revival, making a ton of big kicks in key moments. He will be a solid NFL kicker if he's able to speed up his footwork to get the ball higher more quickly.

#### 5 ALEXIS SERNA

&gt; OREGON STATE

5-6½ 168 5.10

FINAL GRADE 3.8

**Strengths:** Is mentally tough. Made a ton of clutch kicks in college. Shows surprisingly good leg strength for a short kicker. Is consistent from 50-plus yards. Has experience kicking in windy and/or rainy weather. Gets his kicks off quickly.

**Weaknesses:** He is small, even for a kicker. Lacks leg strength on kickoffs and struggles to get the ball deep and create good hang time.

**Bottom line:** Serna has the tools to be a good field goal kicker, but must go to a team that already has a kickoff specialist.

#### 6 ART CARMODY

&gt; LOUISVILLE

5-8¾ 160 5.23

FINAL GRADE 3.8

**Strengths:** Shows a surprisingly strong leg and is regularly able to hit from 45-plus yards. Gets the ball up high quickly to avoid pressure up the middle. Consistently makes clutch kicks to win games.

**Weaknesses:** His size is a concern. Doesn't kick off often, showing a lack of leg strength. Must speed up footwork on field goal attempts to prevent blocks.

**Bottom line:** Carmody is a proven clutch kicker. If he improves his distance and strength on kickoffs, he can be solid in the NFL but probably won't stick around long because of his size and lack of elite leg strength.

## PUNTERS

### 5TH ROUND

#### 1 BRETT KERN

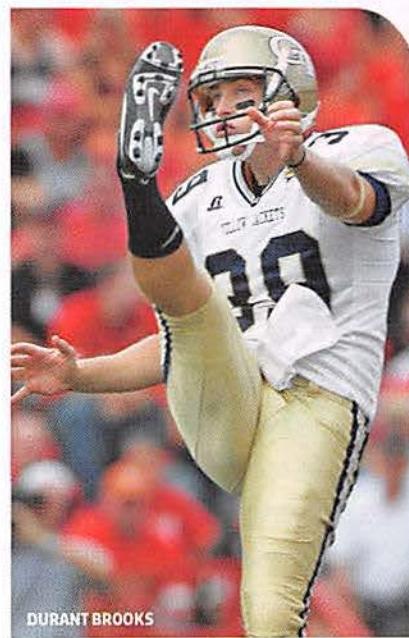
&gt; TOLEDO

6-2½ 195 5.00

FINAL GRADE 5.4

**Strengths:** Shows great leg strength and can really launch a punt. Was a four-year starter who improved greatly in 2007. Can get the ball up high and turn it over with a good, tight spiral. Has good touch on placement/directional punts. Shows the athleticism to catch bad snaps and get rid of the ball quickly.

**Weaknesses:** Was not close to being an NFL



DURANT BROOKS  
prospect before his senior season, so there are questions about him being a "one-year wonder." Was inconsistent during the week of East-West Shrine practices.

**Bottom line:** Kern went from being marginal to the No. 1 punter prospect, which might make some cautious. Still, he should find success in the NFL.

## 6TH ROUND

#### 2 DURANT BROOKS

&gt; GEORGIA TECH

6-0 205 4.95

FINAL GRADE 4.5

**Strengths:** Shows explosive leg strength and power to drive the ball downfield. Gets good height and hangtime on punts. Handles pressure well and shows the hands to field snaps cleanly.

**Weaknesses:** Must become more consistent with placement and accuracy.

**Bottom line:** Brooks must learn to focus more on placement instead of just kicking away, but is a good prospect and should become a quality NFL punter.

## PRIORITY FREE AGENT

#### 3 TIM REYER

&gt; KANSAS STATE

6-0½ 204 5.19

FINAL GRADE 3.9

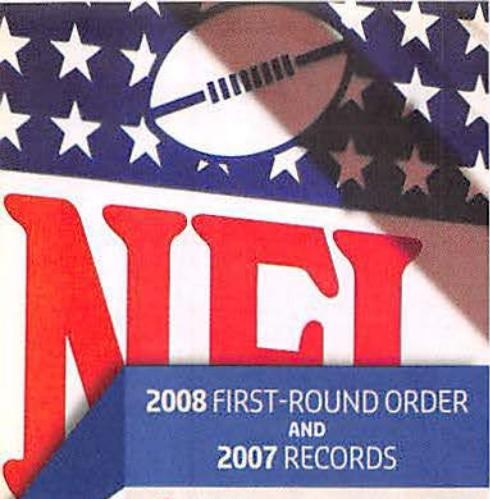
**Strengths:** Shows good leg strength. Can drive the ball downfield, and gets good rise and height on punts. Is mentally tough.

**Weaknesses:** Shows only average athletic ability and accuracy. Must speed up punting delivery.

**Bottom line:** Reyer could compete for a roster spot, but must be more consistent placing the ball.

**Grading system:** 9.0-8.5—Franchise player; 8.4-8.0—Potential Pro Bowl player; 7.9-7.0—Early-impact player; 6.9-6.0—Early contributor; 5.9-5.5—Eventual starter; 5.4-5.0—Quality backup; 4.4-4.0—Chance to make roster; 3.9-3.6—Priority free agent.

**Note:** Each player is assigned a round based on his final grade (potential talent level). Other factors can affect the actual round in which he is drafted.



## 2008 FIRST-ROUND ORDER AND 2007 RECORDS

1	MIAMI	1-15
2	ST. LOUIS	3-13
3	ATLANTA*	4-12
4	OAKLAND*	4-12
5	KANSAS CITY*	4-12
6	N.Y. JETS	4-12
7	NEW ENGLAND#	16-0
8	BALTIMORE	5-11
9	CINCINNATI	7-9
10	NEW ORLEANS	7-9
11	BUFFALO	7-9
12	DENVER	7-9
13	CAROLINA	7-9
14	CHICAGO	7-9
15	DETROIT	7-9
16	ARIZONA	8-8
17	MINNESOTA	8-8
18	HOUSTON	8-8
19	PHILADELPHIA	8-8
20	TAMPA BAY	9-7
21	WASHINGTON	9-7
22	DALLAS^	13-3
23	PITTSBURGH	10-6
24	TENNESSEE	10-6
25	SEATTLE	10-6
26	JACKSONVILLE	11-5
27	SAN DIEGO	11-5
28	DALLAS	13-3
29	SAN FRANCISCO+	5-11
30	GREEN BAY	13-3
31	N.Y. GIANTS	10-6

\* Order was to be determined at the NFL Combine

# from San Francisco

^ from Cleveland

+ from Indianapolis

# DRAFT CENTRAL

In October, the league announced several changes to the NFL Draft. The revisions were made to streamline the process and will go into effect for the first time during this year's event.

Only Rounds 1-2 will take place on the first day. Round 3 of the draft now moves from the end of Day 1 to the start of Day 2.

In addition, the time allotted for teams to make selections in Rounds 1-2 has been reduced. In Round 1, each team will now have 10 minutes to make its pick, down from 15 minutes last year. In Round 2, teams will have seven minutes per selection instead of 10. Teams will continue to get five minutes per pick in Rounds 3-7.

—Katie Koss

### OTHER INFORMATION TO KNOW PRIOR TO THE 73RD NFL DRAFT:

**Where:** Radio City Music Hall, New York City  
**When:** This year, Rounds 1 through 2 will take place on Saturday, April 26, with the first pick being made shortly after 3 p.m. Eastern time. Rounds 3 through 7 will be held on Sunday, April 27, beginning at 10 a.m.

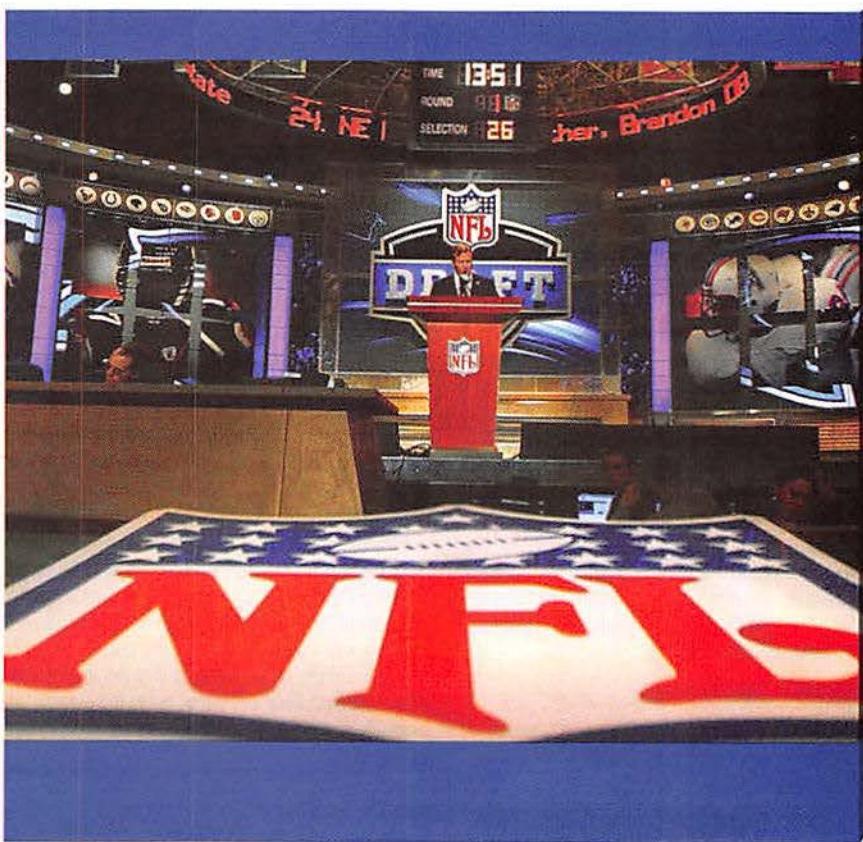
**Tickets:** Tickets are free and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

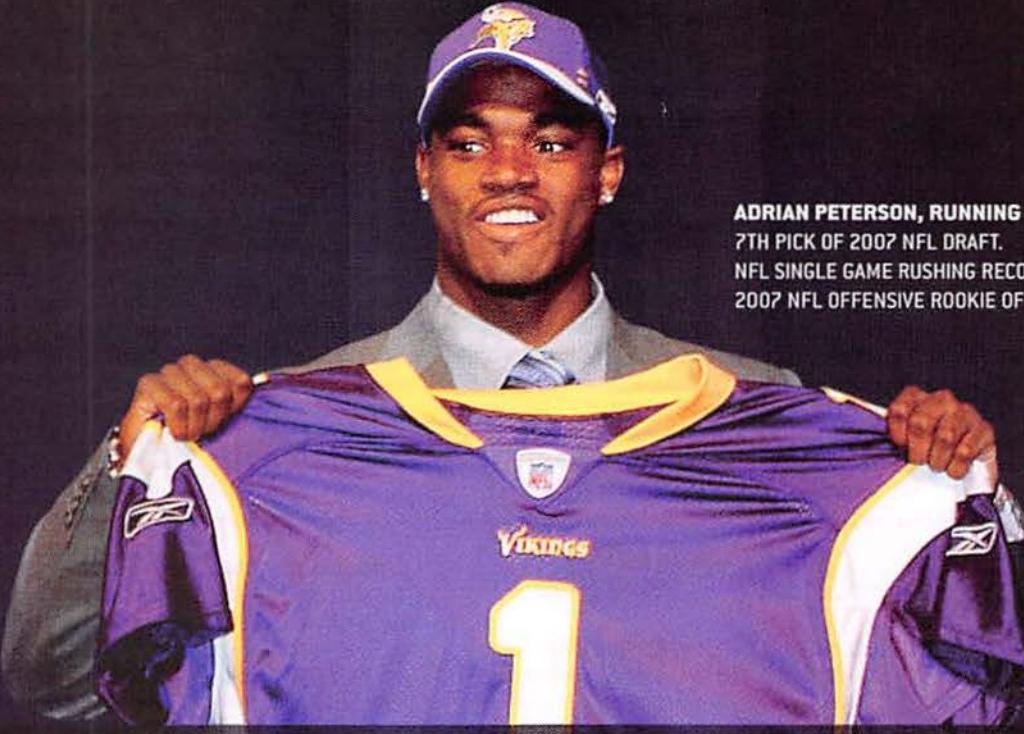
**Television:** ESPN/ESPN2 and NFL Network will televise both days of the draft in their entirety.

**Online:** *Sporting News* covers the draft from start to finish. Our live draft board features a "best available" ranking for every position throughout the draft. On Day 1, War Room scouts offer instant analysis of every pick, plus a projection of the next selection, for the first two rounds. Meanwhile, our 32 NFL team correspondents analyze every pick from both days of the draft. For more information, go to <http://warroom.sportingnews.com>.

**Note**—Several picks in the first round have been affected by trades or league rulings:

- The Patriots lost their original first-round pick, No. 32 overall, as punishment for illegally videotaping the Jets' defensive coaches on the sideline in Week 1 of last season.
- The Patriots acquired the No. 7 overall pick from the 49ers in a 2007 draft-day trade. New England gave San Francisco its first-round pick in 2007 in exchange for a fourth-round selection in 2007 and the 49ers' first-round pick in 2008.
- The 49ers acquired the No. 29 overall pick from the Colts in a 2007 draft-day trade. San Francisco gave Indianapolis its second-round pick in 2007 in exchange for a fourth-round pick in 2007 and the Colts' first-round pick in 2008.
- The Cowboys acquired the No. 22 overall pick from the Browns in a 2007 draft-day trade. Dallas gave Cleveland its first-round pick in 2007 in exchange for a second-round pick in 2007 and the Browns' first-round pick in 2008.





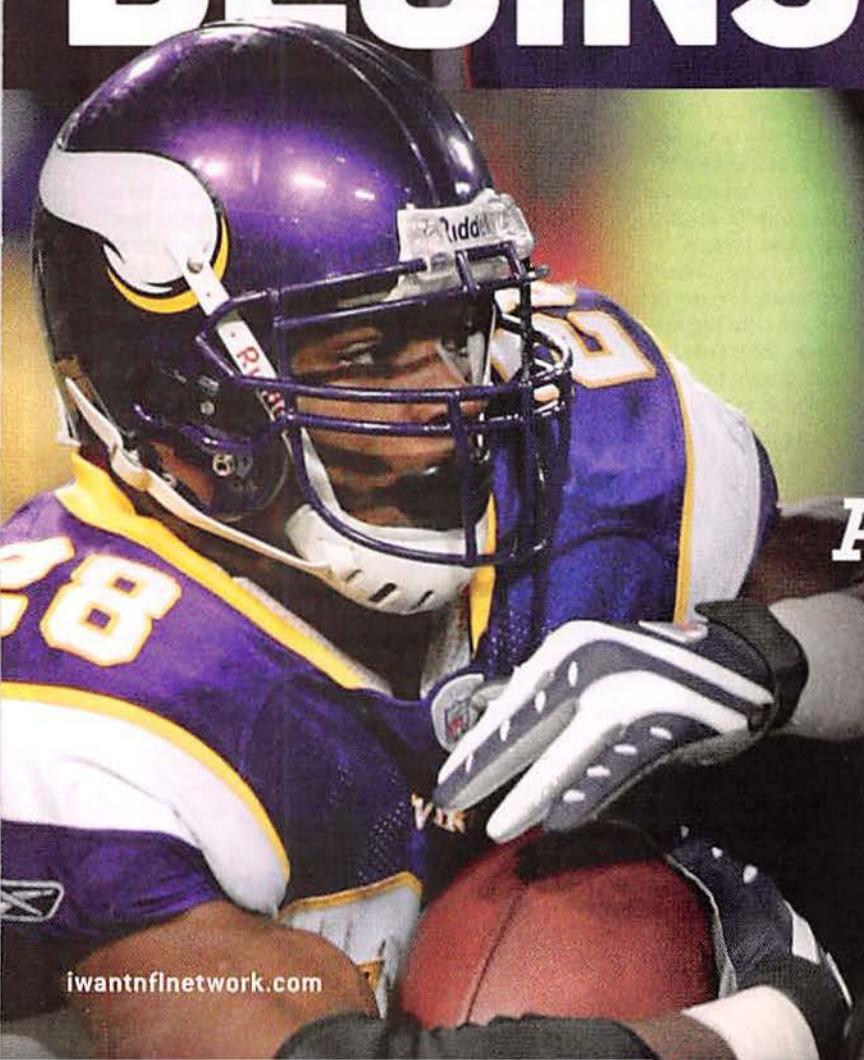
ADRIAN PETERSON, RUNNING BACK.

7TH PICK OF 2007 NFL DRAFT.

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# CARDINALS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

- ★ Elite
- Solid
- Adequate
- Fringe

OFFENSE	
QB	■ Matt Leinart ● Kurt Warner
FB	■ Terrell Smith ● Tim Castille
RB	■ Edgerrin James ● Marcel Shipp
WR	★ Anquan Boldin ● Steve Breaston
WR	★ Larry Fitzgerald ● Jerrieme Urban
TE	○ Leonard Pope ● Ben Patrick
LT	■ Mike Gandy ● Reggie Wells
LG	■ Reggie Wells ● Elton Brown
C	■ Al Johnson ● Lyle Sendlein
RG	■ Deuce Lutui ● Elton Brown
RT	○ Levi Brown ● Reggie Wells

DEFENSE	
LE	■ Antonio Smith ● Chris Cooper
NT	○ Gabe Watson ● Alan Branch
RE	■ Darnell Dockett ● Chris Cooper
OLB	■ Calvin Pace ● Joe Tafoya
ILB	■ Karlos Dansby ● Monty Beisel
ILB	■ Gerald Hayes ● Monty Beisel
OLB	■ Chike Okefor ● Darryl Blackstock
LCB	■ Roderick Hood ● Antrel Rolle
SS	★ Adrian Wilson ● Aaron Francisco
FS	○ Aaron Francisco ● Terrence Holt
RCB	■ Eric Green ● Ralph Brown

SPECIALISTS	
K	○ Neil Rackers
P	● Mitch Berger
KR	○ Steve Breaston
PR	■ Steve Breaston
LS	■ Nathan Hodel

## 5-YEAR RECORD C

Overall, the last five drafts have been decent, but there were some missed opportunities. The 2004 draft was one of the team's best, led by WR **Larry Fitzgerald**, ILB Karlos Dansby and DE Darnell Dockett, who all should be in contention for Pro Bowl honors every year. The '05 draft could turn out to be a colossal bust. The top two selections, CB Antrel Rolle and RB J.J. Arrington, haven't produced as expected. Under G.M. Rod Graves, the later rounds have been productive with LB Gerald Hayes, G Reggie Wells and DE Antonio Smith developing into solid starters.

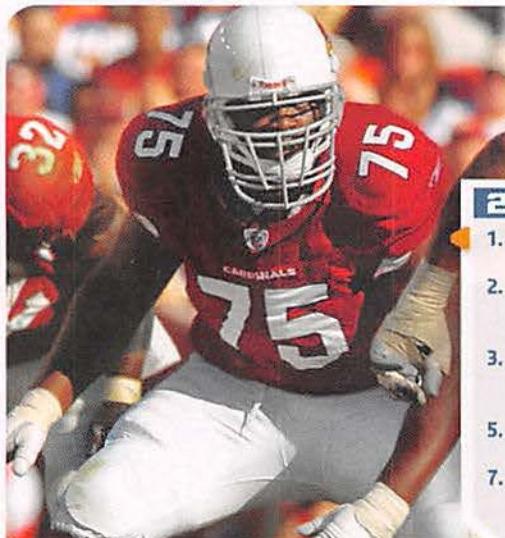


	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	7	7	7	7	5
<b>STUDS</b>	0	1	0	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	4	3	2	4	1
<b>BACKUPS</b>	1	0	3	2	3
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	1	2	1	1	1
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	1	1	1	0	0
<b>YEARLY GRADE &gt;</b>	C	A	D	B	C

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 16th

### NEEDS

- OUTSIDE LINEBACKER/DEFENSIVE END** This is a hybrid position in the Cardinals' defensive scheme, which features a 3-4 base but often morphs into the 4-3 in nickel situations. Veterans Bertrand Berry and Chike Okefor suffered significant injuries last year, and it's doubtful that Berry will be back. There isn't much depth here, and the club could use another pass rusher. Miami's Calais Campbell and Florida's Derrick Harvey will be intriguing prospects.
- CORNERBACK** Starters Roderick Hood and Eric Green are competent players. Antrel Rolle is a good nickel back, but may be better at safety. The club could use an elite corner, which would give it the freedom to move Rolle and shore up the free safety spot. If the Cardinals decide to take a cornerback in the first round, Arizona's Antoine Cason will be hard to pass up.
- OFFENSIVE TACKLE** The Cardinals still believe in Levi Brown, last year's fifth overall pick who had an up and down season as the starter on the right side. Left tackle Mike Gandy has only two years left on his contract, and there is little depth behind him and Brown. Elton Brown is a better guard than tackle, and moving guard Reggie Wells to tackle is not an ideal situation. It's unlikely Arizona would take a tackle in the first round again, but the Cardinals should be intrigued by some prospects, including Vanderbilt's Chris Williams and Pittsburgh's Mike McGlynn.
- WIDE RECEIVER** The team needs to replace Bryant Johnson, its No. 3 receiver. It's also questionable if the club can afford both Larry Fitzgerald and Anquan Boldin in the long term. There's no heir apparent on the roster. Texas' Limas Sweed and Oklahoma's Malcolm Kelly are interesting prospects, but the Cardinals might wait until later rounds to fill this need.



**5. RUNNING BACK** Starter Edgerrin James just doesn't deliver the explosive play that coaches desire. Neither do backups Marcel Shipp and J.J. Arrington, who are just role players. The Cardinals need to add some speed at the position and would like to find a runner with a straight-ahead style, one who keeps dancing to a minimum. Arizona State's Ryan Torain might be available in the middle rounds. Oklahoma's Allen Patrick is another guy to watch, but Arizona could try and address the position by signing a rookie free agent.

**6. INSIDE LINEBACKER** Buster Davis, last year's third-round pick, was a bust and didn't make the team. There also isn't much depth behind starters Gerald Hayes and Karlos Dansby. Monty Beisel is a solid veteran, but Brandon Johnson hasn't shown much. The Cardinals won't use a high pick to fill this need and likely will look for a developmental player.

**7. TIGHT END** This isn't as big a need as it was during the midseason last year. That's when Ben Patrick, a 2007 seventh-round pick, started playing. He filled in well, so the club likely won't take a tight end during the first day. However, someone such as Arizona State's Brent Miller could pique the Cardinals' interest in later rounds.

### OUTLOOK

The Cardinals like their draft position this year: out of the top 10. Their record of picking among the first 10 selections hasn't been great, and those hefty contracts have put dents in the salary cap while limiting the team's options in free agency. Arizona would like to come out of this draft with more than seven players. The Cardinals have several holes to fill and, after drafting just five players last year, they could use the bodies.

It's questionable whether the team will be able to swing any deals, however. Arizona will likely use at least three of its first four picks on defensive players. That's where the Cardinals need the most help. The club's lack of depth on that side of the ball was obvious when it lost three key starters at midseason, and performance dipped sharply. Arizona also needs an infusion of young talent, because it won't be able to keep all of its veterans as their contracts expire.

—Kent Somers, Arizona Republic

### 2007 DRAFT

- Levi Brown / OT** (13 games/11 started) An early-season ankle injury set him back, but more was expected out of the No. 5 pick. ►C
- Alan Branch / NT** (11/0) Has the body and intelligence to be successful, but needs a lot of work on his technique and didn't make an impact as a rookie. ►C
- Buster Davis / ILB** (0/0) Showed up overweight and never displayed the tenacity he showed while at Florida State, leading to him being cut at the end of training camp. ►F
- Steve Breaston / WR** (16/0) As a returner, he filled a desperate need, but still needs a lot of work to move into the No. 3 receiver role. ►A
- Ben Patrick / TE** (8/3) A good athlete who is smart and should improve greatly, he spent the first half of the season on the practice squad but finished as a starter. ►A

# FALCONS

## 5-YEAR RECORD D+

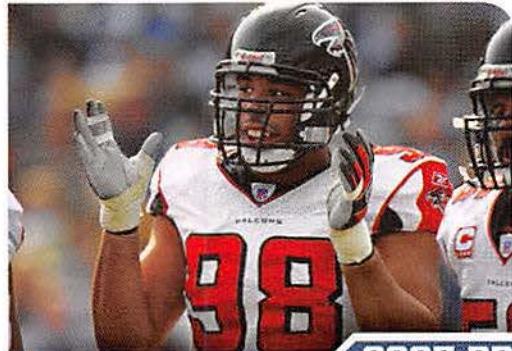
The Rich McKay era of drafting without a "character" filter has left the team devoid of playmakers and with questionable depth. The 2005 draft has been a slow burn. Receiver Roddy White finally broke through last season, while LB Michael Boley and DT Jonathan Babineaux both continue to emerge. Before that, McKay's only claim to fame as G.M. was selecting CB DeAngelo Hall in 2004. Safety Jimmy Williams, Atlanta's top choice in 2006 (as a second-round pick), has struggled and is the biggest strikeout in McKay's time.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	6	7	8	5	11
STUDS	0	1	0	0	0
STARTERS	0	1	3	1	3
BACKUPS	0	1	2	4	8
OTHER TEAMS	3	2	2	0	0
OUT OF NFL	3	2	1	0	0
YEARLY GRADE	F	C	B+	D	C

## NEEDS

**1. QUARTERBACK** Chris Redman's play down the stretch last season may have made the Falcons comfortable enough to name him this year's starter, with an apprentice in training. Atlanta will most certainly come out of the draft with a quarterback and will likely be in position to take the top prospect. André Woodson, Brian Brohm and possibly Matt Ryan all could be on the board when the Falcons pick. If Atlanta doesn't choose a quarterback early, there are some other intriguing prospects later on in the first day such as Delaware's Joe Flacco, Michigan's Chad Henne, Tennessee's Erik Ainge, USC's John David Booty and Hawaii's Colt Brennan.

**2. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** Last year's starting tackles, Todd Weiner and Wayne Gandy (who already had 10-plus seasons under their belts), both went down with season-ending injuries. If the Falcons decide to rebuild this position, Michigan's Jake Long may be on the board when they pick. If Long can come in and stabilize the left tackle position like Joe Thomas did for Cleveland last year,



## 2007 DRAFT

- JAMAAL ANDERSON / DE** (16 games/16 started) Started all 16 games, but had no sacks. ► D
- Justin Blalock / LG** (14/14) Had trouble picking up stunts and struggled in the run game. ► D
- Chris Houston / CB** (16/11) Displayed moments in coverage, but tailed off down the stretch. ► C
- Laurent Robinson / WR** (15/6) Has home-run speed and good hands, so look for a breakout year in 2008. ► B
- Stephen Nicholas / LB** (13/0) A high-ankle sprain marred a fine rookie season, but he should eventually be a starter at weak side. ► B
- Martrez Milner / TE** (8/2) Showed promise before suffering a season-ending ankle injury. ► B
- Trey Lewis / DT** (9/5) Was thrust into the starting lineup early and performed well before suffering a season-ending knee injury. ► B
- David Irons / CB** (15/0) Played well on special teams, and should get a chance to show his coverage skills in 2008. ► C
- Doug Datisch / C** (0/0) Suffered hard luck last year when he broke his wrist early in training camp. ► INC
- Daren Stone / SS** (12/0) Played well in spot duty down the stretch and was a force on special teams. ► B
- Jason Snelling / RB** (7/0) Hard-running hybrid running back/fullback who was used on short-yardage situations late in the season. ► B



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

QB O Chris Redman  
QB ● Joey Harrington

FB O Ovie Mughelli  
FB ● Corey McIntyre

RB ■ Jerious Norwood  
RB O Warrick Dunn

WR O Joe Horn  
WR O Michael Jenkins

WR O Roddy White  
WR O Joe Horn

TE O Martrez Milner

LT O Todd Weiner  
LT ● Quinn Ojinnaka

LG O Justin Blalock  
LG ● D'Anthony Battiste

C ■ Todd McClure  
C ● Ben Wilkerson

RG O Kynan Forney  
RG ● Ben Wilkerson

RT ■ Tyson Clabo  
RT ● Harvey Dahl

### DEFENSE

LE O Chauncey Davis  
LE O Jamaal Anderson

NT O Montavious Stanley  
NT ● Tim Anderson

UT O Jonathan Babineaux  
UT O Chauncey Davis

RE ■ John Abraham  
RE ● Derrick Jones

SLB ■ Michael Boley  
SLB ● Michael Boley

MLB ■ Keith Brooking  
MLB ● Tony Taylor

WLB ■ Stephen Nicholas  
WLB ● Travis Williams

LCB ■ DeAngelo Hall  
LCB O David Irons

SS ■ Lawyer Milloy  
SS O Daren Stone

FS ■ Jimmy Williams  
FS ● Antoine Harris

RCB O Chris Houston  
RCB ● Brent Grimes

### SPECIALISTS

K ■ Morten Andersen

P ■ Michael Koenen

KR ■ Jerious Norwood

PR ■ DeAngelo Hall

LS ■ Mike Schneck

## OUTLOOK

New general manager Thomas Dimitroff is charged with overhauling a flawed roster that had too much money tied up in the quarterback position. He'll have salary cap restraints stemming from Michael Vick's incarceration and porous free-agent signings. The needs are plenty, and if the Falcons don't like the top quarterback prospects, look for them to make a move for quantity over quality and trade down in the first round. The No. 1 priority would then be to rebuild the mediocre offensive and defensive lines.

The Falcons need to add some strength on both sides of the ball. One of the biggest decisions could be which one of the Long boys (no relation) to take. It's going to be hard to pass up on left tackle Jake, while defensive end Chris could be sitting on the board when the Falcons pick. But the offense is in more dire straits than the defense and may get the most attention in this draft.

—D. Orlando Ledbetter, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

## RAVENS


**PROJECTED DEPTH CHART**

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
□ Fringe

**OFFENSE**

QB	■ Steve McNair ○ Kyle Boller
FB	○ Le'Ron McClain ○ Justin Green
RB	★ Willis McGahee ○ Musa Smith
WR	■ Derrick Mason ○ Demetress Williams
WR	○ Mark Clayton ○ Devaron Darling
TE	★ Todd Heap ○ Daniel Wilcox
LT	★ Jonathan Ogden ○ Jared Gaither
LG	■ Jason Brown ○ Chris Chester
C	■ Mike Flynn ○ Chris Chester
RG	○ Ben Grubbs ○ Chris Chester
RT	○ Marshal Yanda ○ Adam Terry

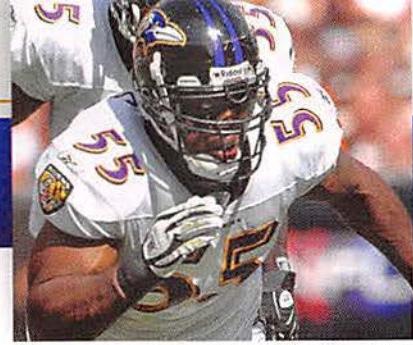
**DEFENSE**

LE	★ Trevor Pryce ○ Dwan Edwards
NT	★ Kelly Gregg ○ Justin Bannan
RE	★ Haloti Ngata ○ Justin Bannan
OLB	■ Jarret Johnson ○ Prescott Burgess
ILB	★ Ray Lewis ○ Nick Greisen
ILB	★ Bart Scott ○ Nick Greisen
OLB	★ Terrell Suggs ○ Gary Stills
LCB	★ Chris McAlister ○ Corey Ivey
SS	○ Dwan Landry ○ Jerome Sapp
FS	★ Ed Reed ○ Jerome Sapp
RCB	■ Samari Rolle ○ Corey Ivey

**SPECIALISTS**

K	★ Matt Stover
P	■ Sam Koch
KR	○ Yamon Figurs
PR	○ Yamon Figurs
LS	■ Matt Kataula

2007 RECORD: 5-11  
[www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/ravens](http://www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/ravens)

**5-YEAR RECORD** C

Nearly half of the players drafted in 2003 became starters, and one, **OLB Terrell Suggs**, is a two-time All-Pro selection. Baltimore didn't have a first-round pick in 2004, and the players it selected in the other rounds didn't have much quality. The Ravens' draft two years ago also ended up being a bust, causing some to think general manager Ozzie Newsome was losing his touch in discovering talent. However, during the 2006 draft, Newsome found a stud in DT Haloti Ngata and gems in P Sam Koch, WR Demetrius Williams and S Dawan Landry.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	11	7	7	10	8
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	3	1	3	4	3
BACKUPS	2	1	1	5	5
OTHER TEAMS	3	1	1	0	0
OUT OF NFL	3	4	2	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	B	D	C-	B	A

**FIRST-ROUND PICK** 8th**NEEDS**

**1. CORNERBACK** ▶ Age and injuries hurt the Ravens at this position last year, so they can't afford another season without a good developing prospect. Baltimore needs a big, strong cornerback who specializes in man-to-man coverage, as the Ravens like to blitz often. Baltimore has a couple of good-looking options in South Florida's Mike Jenkins and Troy's Leodis McKelvin.

**2. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** ▶ The Ravens already have a couple of young prospects to possibly fill in on the left side in second-year player Jared Gaither and Adam Terry, who is in his fourth season. Both have tons of potential, but Terry is considered too soft and Gaither might be another year or two away. If Jonathan Ogden retires, Baltimore would need an instant starter on the left side, probably moving Gaither and Terry to the right. The Ravens must find a quality tackle to protect the blind side of already fragile veteran quarterback Steve McNair. Michigan's Jake Long is big, physical, quick and an outstanding prospect. Vanderbilt's Chris Williams and USC's Sam Baker are also options.

**3. INSIDE LINEBACKER** ▶ Baltimore has two outstanding veterans on the roster in Bart Scott and Ray Lewis, but both of their contracts are up after next season, meaning the team will probably start grooming replacements (especially for Lewis). The Ravens have two solid young prospects on the roster in Prescott Burgess and Edgar Jones, but it could always use another one.

**4. QUARTERBACK** ▶ The Ravens already have three signal-callers on the roster, but none are considered the team's quarterback of the future. Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome would like to hit a home run at this position, because it has been his Achilles' heel in the past. Fortunately, there are a lot of good quarterbacks in this year's draft, and the Ravens might be able to land someone such as Delaware's Joe Flacco, Tennessee's Erik Ainge or USC's John David Booty in the second or third rounds.

**5. DEFENSIVE END** ▶ The team's defense does a lot of shifting up front, so the ends and tackles are interchangeable. Starting end Trevor Pryce missed a lot of playing time in 2007 with multiple injuries, and backup Dwan Edwards has yet to become a solid starter. The Ravens are looking for possible players here that they can develop down the road.

**6. SAFETY** ▶ Baltimore will look for backup help in this area, as well as special teams players. Few of the Ravens' secondary reserves did much to prove that they even belonged on an NFL roster last year. Players such Notre Dame's Tom Zbikowski or Arkansas State's Tyrell Johnson are targets.

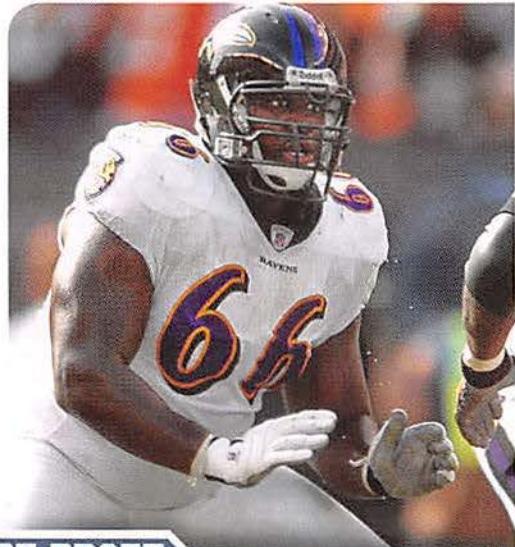
**7. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** ▶ The Ravens need speed on the outside and players who can drop into coverage. Pass coverage became a liability last season and with help in this area, Baltimore could turn Bart Scott loose again as a blitzing linebacker, his main strength.

**OUTLOOK**

The Ravens would like to draft a franchise-caliber quarterback, so they'll talk trade possibilities in order to move up and select Boston College's Matt Ryan. In the 12 seasons the team has played in Baltimore, it's never drafted a player who ended up being a long-term answer at quarterback. Ryan would be a big splash in Baltimore, especially after the Ravens won only five games a year ago, way below their own lofty expectations.

If Baltimore can't trade up, the team will likely select the highest-rated cornerback or offensive tackle with its first-round pick. Drafting a cornerback is a more glaring need, but the Ravens always take the best available player on their draft board regardless of the position. After filling those two to three immediate needs, Baltimore will look for projects or future starters in the mid to late rounds. General manager Ozzie Newsome always drafts a lot of linebackers to fill special-teams needs, and his last couple of selections should be on the defensive side of the ball.

—Mike Preston, Baltimore Sun

**2007 DRAFT**

- 1. BEN GRUBBS / G** (16 games/12 started) A good skill level matched his work ethic. ► B+
- 3a. Yamon Figurs / WR** (14/0) Has outstanding speed and breakaway ability, but is not football smart. ► C
- 3b. Marshal Yanda / OT** (16/12) Possesses a nasty attitude and strong work ethic, and is a solid tackle who can become a good guard. ► C+
- 4a. Antwan Barnes / LB** (14/0) Has a great first step, surprising power and will be a great pick out of this draft. ► B
- 4b. Le'Ron McClain / FB** (16/11) A big hitter without outstanding potential, but cockiness might be a problem. ► C+
- 5. Troy Smith / QB** (4/2) Played well at the end of last year, and has good attributes like pocket awareness and confidence. ► C
- 6. Prescott Burgess / LB** (8/0) A leg injury forced him to miss most of last season's second half. ► C



2007 RECORD: 7-9  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/bills

BUFFALO

# BILLS



## 5-YEAR RECORD C+

The last two drafts under former general manager Marv Levy were far better than the previous two under Levy's predecessor, Tom Donahoe. Six of the Bills' nine 2006 draft picks started games as rookies and five went into this season as starters. After trading 2003 first-round pick Willis McGahee, Buffalo found an able replacement in last year's first-round selection, RB Marshawn Lynch. Clearly, the 2004 and '05 drafts were the worst over the last five years. In 2004, the Bills chose WR Lee Evans and QB J.P. Losman in the first round. After showing promise in 2006, both took a step back last season.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	8	6	6	9	7
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	3	1	0	4	2
BACKUPS	2	1	3	4	4
OTHER TEAMS	1	2	2	1	0
OUT OF NFL	2	2	1	0	1
YEARLY GRADE	B-	C-	D-	A-	B+

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** Buffalo has ignored the need for a space-eating defensive tackle in recent years because its defensive scheme favors quickness over size. But adding a big tackle who can occupy blockers would complement the athletic interior guys on the roster. LSU's Glenn Dorsey and USC's Sedrick Ellis are the only sure-fire first-round picks, and will likely be gone when the Bills pick 11th overall. But Auburn's Pat Sims (6-4, 314), Texas' Frank Okam (6-5, 320) and Texas A&M's Red Bryant (6-5, 322) are good options because of their size and outstanding athleticism.

**2. WIDE RECEIVER** It was way too easy for defenses to neutralize top receiver Lee Evans last season, because opponents didn't fear the Bills' No. 2 wideout. They could use a big, physical target who can win jump balls and make catches in traffic. LSU's Early Doucet (6-0, 205) or Texas' Limas Sweeny (6-5, 219) would be ideal if the Bills address the position in the first round. Oklahoma State's Adarius Bowman (6-4, 220) may slip on draft day because of a knee injury, but he's a first-round talent who could be a steal in the second or third round.

**3. TIGHT END** The lack of production at this position has been a problem for the Bills for the past six years. A good receiving tight end who can stretch the middle of the field would help quarterback Trent Edwards immensely next season. USC's Fred Davis, Missouri's Martin Rucker, Notre Dame's John Carlson, Purdue's Dustin Keller, Texas A&M's Martellus Bennett and Texas' Jermichael Finley all have outstanding skills as receivers and can run after the catch.

**4. CORNERBACK** Terrence McGee and Jabari Greer seem set as starters, while Kiwaukee Thomas and Ashton Youboty are the top backups. But Jason Webster is a free agent and Greer and Thomas are entering the final year of their contracts, so the Bills must prepare in case they lose them. Buffalo could use a corner with some size who can excel in man and zone coverage. South Florida's Mike Jenkins, Troy's Leodis McElroy, USC's

Terrell Thomas, LSU's Chevis Jackson, Kansas' Aqib Talib and Virginia Tech's Victor Harris are among the many possibilities.

**5. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** Potential free-agent defections could hurt depth behind outside starters Angelo Crowell and Keith Ellison. USC's Keith Rivers would be hard to pass on in the first round, but Maryland's Erin Henderson, Florida State's Geno Hayes, Miami's Tavares Gooden, Virginia Tech's Xavier Adibi and LSU's Ali Highsmith might be available in either the second or third round.

**6. CENTER** Melvin Fowler has been an adequate starter during his six-year career, but at some point the Bills have to groom his replacement. Buffalo won't spend a high pick on this position, but it may look at players such as Notre Dame's John Sullivan or Texas A&M's Cody Wallace.

**7. DEFENSIVE END** This isn't a huge priority, but injuries at this position last season showed why the team needs to have depth. With Anthony Hargrove suspended for 2008 for violating the NFL's substance abuse policy and Al Wallace possibly leaving as a free agent, the Bills could use a young prospect such as Virginia Tech's Chris Ellis or Georgia Tech's Darrell Robertson.

## OUTLOOK

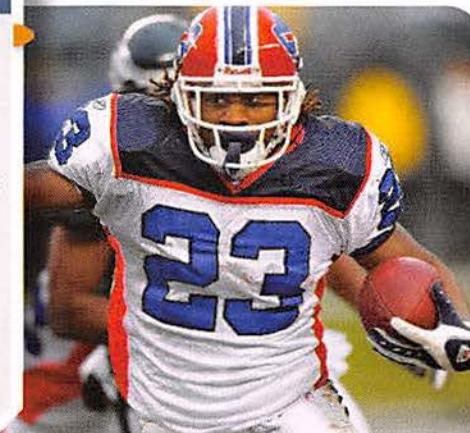
Trent Edwards' successful rookie year led the Bills to decide he is their quarterback of the future. Now Buffalo has to provide more weapons to help him be successful. Limas Sweeny or Early Doucet would be extremely enticing with the No. 11 pick. But the team also has a pressing need for a stud defensive tackle to help shore up a woeful run defense.

After finishing 7-9 for a second straight season, the Bills believe they are only a few players short from turning the corner as a franchise. Buffalo has been able to find players capable making an immediate impact in the last two drafts. If the Bills have similar success this year, they have a chance to take another step toward improving from playoff contender to playoff participant.

—Allen Wilson, Buffalo News

## 2007 DRAFT

- MARSHAWN LYNCH / RB** (13 games/13 started) A physical workhorse back with all-purpose skills and potential to be an elite runner for years to come. ►A
- Paul Posluszny / MLB** (3/3) His season ended early with a broken forearm, but he has the athleticism, instincts and smarts to be outstanding. ►B-
- Trent Edwards / QB** (10/9) A smart and accurate passer who has a lot to learn about coverages, but should get better with experience. ►B
- Dwayne Wright / RB** (15/0) Saw limited playing time, but has a good future because he's tough and runs hard. ►C-
- John Wendling / S** (14/0) Didn't see much action on defense, but displayed athletic ability and toughness as a special teams standout. ►C-
- Derek Schouman / TE** (3/1) A good blocker and receiver who was promoted from the practice squad at midseason and then suffered a season-ending injury. ►D
- C.J. Ah You / DE** (0/0) Did not make the regular-season roster and is now out of football. ►F



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

- QB ○ Trent Edwards
- QB ● Gibran Hamdan
- FB ○ Darian Barnes
- RB ■ Marshawn Lynch
- RB ○ Fred Jackson
- WR ■ Lee Evans
- WR ○ Roscoe Parrish
- WR ○ Josh Reed
- TE ○ Robert Royal
- TE ○ Michael Gaines

### DEFENSE

- LT ★ Jason Peters
- LT ○ Kirk Chambers
- LG ■ Derrick Dockery
- LG ○ Duke Preston
- C ○ Melvin Fowler
- C ● Jason Whittle
- RG ○ Brad Butler
- RG ● Jason Whittle
- RT ○ Langston Walker
- RT ● Kirk Chambers

### DEFENSE

- LE ■ Chris Kelsay
- LE ■ Ryan Denney
- NT ○ Kyle Williams
- NT ● Jason Jefferson
- DT ○ Larry Tripplett
- DT ○ John McCargo
- RE ★ Aaron Schobel
- RE ○ Ryan Neill
- SLB ■ Angelo Crowell
- SLB ● Josh Stamer
- MLB ■ Paul Posluszny
- MLB ○ John DiGiorgio

### WLB

- WLB ○ Keith Ellison
- WLB ● Mario Haggan

### LCB

- LCB ○ Jason Webster

### SS

- SS ■ Donte Whitner
- SS ○ John Wendlung

### FS

- FS ○ Ko Simpson
- FS ○ Jim Leonhard

### RCB

- RCB ○ Terrence McGee
- RCB ● Ashton Youboty

### SPECIALISTS

- K ■ Rian Lindell

- P ★ Brian Moorman

- KR ★ Terrence McGee

- PR ★ Roscoe Parrish

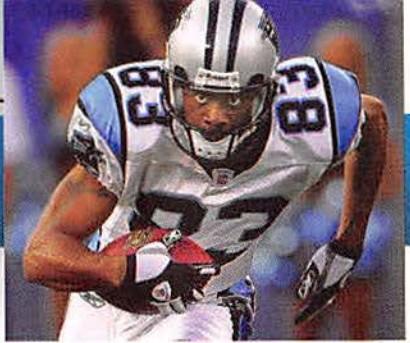
- LS ○ Ryan Neill

# PANTHERS



## 5-YEAR RECORD C-

The Panthers need to break their streak of drafting players who end up underachieving. Carolina has spent high picks on the likes of RB Eric Shelton (second round, 2005) and C Bruce Nelson (second round, 2003), only to watch them fizzle out of the league after a couple of years. Even those who have stuck around, such as WR Keary Colbert and G Evan Mathis, have been less than impressive during their time with Carolina. Last year's winner to continue this downward trend is WR Dwayne Jarrett, who was supposed to replace Keyshawn Johnson in the starting lineup but barely got onto the field.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	8	6	10	8	8
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	1	2	1	1	1
BACKUPS	1	2	3	5	7
OTHER TEAMS	3	1	3	1	0
OUT OF NFL	3	1	3	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	D-	C	D	C	C

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

OFFENSE
QB Jake Delhomme
QB Matt Moore
FB Brad Hoover
RB DeShaun Foster
RB DeAngelo Williams
WR Steve Smith
WR Ryne Robinson
WR Drew Carter
WR Dwayne Jarrett
TE Jeff King
TE Dante Rosario
LT Travelle Wharton
LT Frank Omiyale
LG Justin Hartwig
LG Evan Mathis
C Ryan Kalil
RG Geoff Hangartner
RG Jeremy Bridges
RT Jordan Gross
RT Evan Mathis
DEFENSE
LE Julius Peppers
LE Charles Johnson
LT Mookie Kemoeatu
LT Kindal Moorehead
RT Kris Jenkins
RT Damione Lewis
RE Mike Rucker
RE Stanley McClover
SLB Thomas Davis
SLB James Anderson
MLB Jon Beason
MLB Adam Seward
WLB Na'il Diggs
WLB James Anderson
LCB Chris Gamble
LCB Ken Lucas
SS Chris Harris
SS Marquand Manuel
FS Deke Cooper
FS Quinton Teal
RCB Richard Marshall
RCB Ken Lucas
SPECIALISTS
K John Kasay
P Jason Baker
KR Ryne Robinson
PR Ryne Robinson
LS Jason Kyle

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 13th

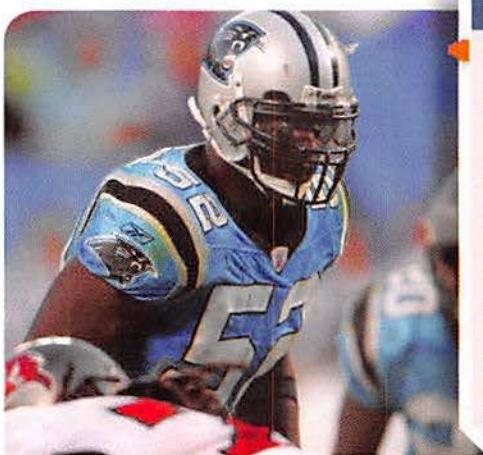
### NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE END** Even though Mike Rucker is now likely to return, the Panthers could use some depth here. Rucker is 33 years old and entering his 10th NFL season. On the other side, Julius Peppers had one of his worst seasons ever and is entering the final year of his contract. Carolina needs to add at least one defensive end in the draft, as backups Stanley McClover and Charles Johnson have done little so far to show that they can become full-time starters. USC's Lawrence Jackson, Miami's Calais Campbell and Florida's Derrick Harvey all would fit in the Panthers' 4-3 and provide immediate competition.

**2. SAFETY** Although Chris Harris came over from Chicago and established himself at strong safety, the free safety spot was manned by several players, none of whom are worth starting in 2008. If Miami's Kenny Phillips is still around at No. 13, Carolina should jump at the chance to draft him. Phillips has strong cover skills and is the next in line of star Hurricane safeties. If the Panthers wait until the second round to fill this need, Alabama's Simeon Castille is an option.

**3. RECEIVER** At times last year, Steve Smith was triple-teamed during games. That's how little Panthers opponents feared the No. 2 wideout, which alternated between Drew Carter and Keary Colbert. Both players are unrestricted free agents, and it wouldn't be a surprise if Carolina let both walk. Last year's second-round pick, Dwayne Jarrett, was unable to grasp the playbook and played sparingly. California's DeSean Jackson, Indiana's James Hardy and LSU's Early Doucet would all be good fits.

**4. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** The Panthers re-signed left tackle Travelle Wharton and were hoping to do the same with right tackle Jordan Gross. However, Carolina could still use some depth to back those two up. Boise State's Ryan Clady would be strongly considered if he slips to 13th overall, while Auburn's King Dunlap and Pittsburgh's Jeff Otah are other options.



**5. RUNNING BACK** With DeAngelo Williams waiting in the wings, DeShaun Foster may be a salary-cap casualty this year if the team decides \$4.75 million is too much to pay for someone who has a total of just eight rushing TDs in the last three seasons. Specifically, Carolina could use a stronger back who can move the chains on short-yardage situations and at the goal line. This would be an area the Panthers are likely to address in the later rounds, where possibilities include Michigan's Mike Hart, Georgia Tech's Tashard Choice and Georgia's Thomas Brown.

**6. QUARTERBACK** Starter Jake Delhomme underwent Tommy John surgery in October and, while he is expected to be ready for training camp, the Panthers may want to look in the draft for insurance, as the free-agent signing of David Carr last offseason looks to be a mistake. Bringing someone in such as Michigan's Chad Henne or Oregon's Dennis Dixon would create competition if nothing else.

### OUTLOOK

Carolina owner Jerry Richardson gave a vote of confidence in the offseason to coach John Fox and general manager Marty Hurney, but the feeling is both could be gone if the Panthers fail to make the playoffs in 2008. That heightens the importance of the draft for the duo, who have had a spotty record in recent years. Fox has always been defensive-minded, and upgrades are sorely needed on that side of the ball, especially in the secondary.

Although receiver Dwayne Jarrett vowed to be prepared for 2008 and hired an offseason trainer, the Panthers can't rely on words alone. Another wideout is needed, either in the draft or free agency, to take pressure off Steve Smith. The hopes are that quarterback Jake Delhomme is fully healthy after elbow surgery shut him down in October, and Carolina could use some improvement in his protection, especially if left tackle Travelle Wharton isn't re-signed.

—Matt McKenzie, Sporting News

### 2007 DRAFT

- JON BEASON / OLB** (16 games/16 started) Ranked third in the NFL in tackles last year and quickly became a defensive leader. ► A
- Dwayne Jarrett / WR** (7/0) Was a huge disappointment after high hopes, as he saw little playing time among whispers of a flawed work ethic. ► D
- Ryan Kalil / C** (6/3) Started three of six games last year and is still projected to be the center of the future. ► C
- Charles Johnson / DE** (3/2) Was impressive in the final three games and could battle Mike Rucker for a starting spot in 2008. ► C
- Ryne Robinson / WR** (16/0) Had some costly fumbles as a punt returner, but also showed flashes of brilliance. ► C+
- Dante Rosario / TE** (16/2) Barely played early on, but broke through with two TDs when given the chance late in the season. ► B
- Tim Shaw / LB** (14/0) Played sparingly, and when he was on the field, it was with the special teams. ► C-
- C.J. Wilson / CB** (4/0) Was put on the practice squad initially and then activated for four games late in the season. ► D



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	12	8	6	7	9
STUDS	1	1	0	1	0
STARTERS	2	3	1	2	1
BACKUPS	1	1	3	2	7
OTHER TEAMS	4	2	1	0	0
OUT OF NFL	5	3	1	2	1
YEARLY GRADE >	C+	B+	D-	A-	C

# BEARS

## 5-YEAR RECORD B-

Shrewd choices on defense have produced three Pro Bowl players over this span, not including revolutionary return man Devin Hester, who the club hopes is a budding offensive superstar. Bears G.M. Jerry Angelo has found success up and down the draft, particularly in the middle rounds, where he's tabbed LB Lance Briggs, CB Nathan Vasher and DE Mark Anderson. Quarterback remains another major problem and it's still uncertain if 2005 fourth-round pick Kyle Orton can develop. Failing to strike gold with RB Cedric Benson, the No. 4 pick in 2005, hurt the team's grade.

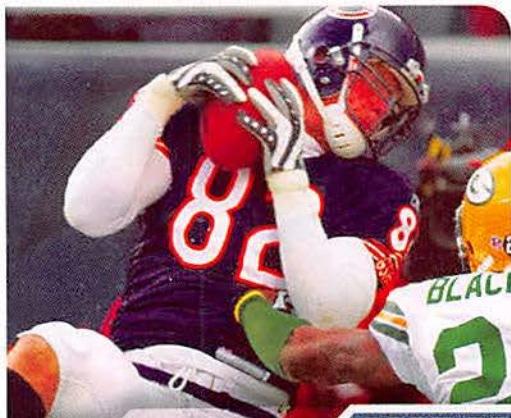


## NEEDS

**1. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** The Bears need a tackle to come in and contribute immediately, making it the top position in a draft that will be dominated by offensive players. Veteran Fred Miller has held down right tackle for three straight seasons, but age has caught up with him and a large salary makes it questionable whether he will return. An impressive bunch of tackles should be around at No. 14, including USC's Sam Baker, Vanderbilt's Chris Williams, Boise State's Ryan Clady and Pittsburgh's Jeff Otah.

**2. QUARTERBACK** Chicago has yet to identify a solution at quarterback on its roster—perhaps because one doesn't exist—and has been searching high and low for one. General manager Jerry Angelo has personally checked out Boston College's Matt Ryan on a number of occasions, and the organization has been tracking Delaware's Joe Flacco since the start of his junior year.

**3. WIDE RECEIVER** Bernard Berrian could flee via free agency in the offseason, and while the team has said Devin Hester has the tools to develop into a No. 1 receiver, counting



## 2007 DRAFT

- GREG OLSEN / TE** (14 games/4 started) The Bears got the best tight end in the draft; they just didn't use him much. ► B
- Dan Bazuin / DE** (0/0) A knee injury prevented him from challenging unhappy Alex Brown. ► INC
- Garrett Wolfe / RB** (13/0) Said he should be a second-day pick and was used like one. ► D
- Michael Okwuo / LB** (0/0) Chicago reached for an undersized linebacker who will have to make his first mark in special teams. ► INC
- Josh Beekman / G** (1/0) He's working mostly at center, but Olin Kreutz is entrenched there. ► C-
- Kevin Payne / S** (3/1) This hard hitter with good upside picked up the team's scheme quickly before injuries derailed him. ► B
- Corey Graham / CB** (13/0) Quickly found a way to contribute on special teams. ► B-
- Trumaine McBride / CB** (16/9) Pitched in as a starter, but size could prevent him from being more than a role player. ► A-
- Aaron Brant / OT** (0/0) Bears needed offensive tackle help, but he didn't make it out of training camp. ► F

on that could set him up for failure. The offense badly needs an infusion of playmakers, and, with two third-round choices this year, the Bears could tab someone such as Kentucky's Keenan Burton or Oklahoma's Malcolm Kelly with those picks.

**4. SAFETY** The team thought it was covered here with the addition of veteran Adam Archuleta and draft pick Kevin Payne last year, but things unraveled in a hurry. Mike Brown had his season end prematurely for the fourth straight year, and Payne broke his arm in Week 4. Miami's Kenny Phillips would be an ideal fit in the first round, but taking him would ignore the glaring need for a tackle and playmakers on offense.

**5. RUNNING BACK** Not long ago, this position was a strength on the team. Now, it's among the growing list of needs, as Cedric Benson once again underperformed last season. Chances are the club could go the free-agent route here, but if not, it will look to add a multi-dimensional back. If Arkansas' Felix Jones fell to the second round, he would be ideal.

**6. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** The club expects Dusty Dvoracek to rebound nicely from a knee injury, but the Bears are still trying to replace Tank Johnson and need a consistent presence to line up next to perennial Pro Bowl performer Tommie Harris.

**7. GUARD** It's easier to find a journeyman to plug in here than on the outside, but the team has a hole to fill at left guard, where Ruben Brown has manned for the last three seasons. Terrence Metcalf isn't the answer and, while Chicago may find an option elsewhere, it needs to bring along a young player. Look for this position to be addressed on the second day.

**8. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** There are plenty of candidates to replace Lance Briggs (who will likely leave via free agency) at weakside linebacker, starting with Jamar Williams, but none of them are proven. The Bears build the core of their special teams with reserve linebackers, so an athletic pick who is undersized and can run well would fit in nicely in the later rounds.

## OUTLOOK

Following a disappointing 7-9 campaign, Bears general manager Jerry Angelo stated that offense would be the primary focus of this offseason. It will be a challenge, though, because while Angelo and director of college scouting Greg Gabriel have hit in all rounds when it comes to selecting defense, the pair has a track record of missing on offense.

With as many needs as the team has, it's unlikely Chicago will package picks to move up. Historically, Angelo has looked to deal down to amass quantity and that could be the case again, especially in Round 3, where the Bears own San Diego's pick. Two years removed from a trip to the Super Bowl, Chicago can be in position to challenge in the NFC again, but must discover some offensive talent that can contribute immediately.

—Brad Biggs, Chicago Sun-Times

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

- QB ○ Kyle Orton  
○ Brian Griese
- FB ○ Jason McKie  
● Lousaka Polite
- RB ○ Cedric Benson  
○ Adrian Peterson
- WR ○ Mark Bradley  
○ Devin Hester
- WR ○ Muhsin Muhammad  
● Mike Hass
- TE ■ Desmond Clark  
○ Greg Olsen
- LT ■ John Tait  
○ John St. Clair
- LG ● Terrence Metcalf
- C ★ Olin Kreutz  
● Anthony Oakley
- RG ■ Roberto Garza  
● Josh Beekman
- RT ○ Fred Miller  
○ John St. Clair

### DEFENSE

- LE ■ Adewale Ogunleye  
○ Israel Idonije
- DT ★ Tommie Harris  
● Matt Toetana
- DT ○ Dusty Dvoracek  
○ Anthony Adams
- RE ○ Mark Anderson  
● Alex Brown
- SLB ■ Hunter Hillenmeyer  
○ Nick Roach
- MLB ★ Brian Urlacher  
● Rod Wilson
- WLB ○ Jamar Williams  
● Michael Okwuo
- LCB ★ Charles Tillman  
● Corey Graham
- SS ○ Brandon McGowan  
○ Kevin Payne
- FS ○ Mike Brown  
○ Daniel Manning
- RCB ■ Nathan Vasher  
● Trumaine McBride

### SPECIALISTS

- K ■ Robbie Gould
- P ■ Brad Maynard
- KR ★ Devin Hester
- PR ★ Devin Hester
- LS ★ Patrick Mannelly

# BENGALS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

OFFENSE
QB ★ Carson Palmer ○ Ryan Fitzpatrick
FB ■ Jeremi Johnson ■ Reggie Kelly
RB ■ Rudi Johnson ○ Kenny Watson
WR ★ Chad Johnson ■ Chris Henry
WR ★ T.J. Houshamzadeh ● Antonio Chatman
TE ■ Reggie Kelly ○ Daniel Coats
LT ■ Levi Jones ■ Andrew Whitworth
LG ■ Andrew Whitworth ■ Stacy Andrews
C ○ Eric Ghiaciuc ○ Alex Stepanovich
RG ■ Bobbie Williams ○ Scott Kooistra
RT ★ Willie Anderson ■ Stacy Andrews

## DEFENSE

LE ■ Robert Geathers ○ Jonathan Fanene
DT ■ Domata Peko ○ Michael Myers
DT ○ John Thornton ● Titus Adams
RE ○ Frostee Rucker ● Jonathan Fanene
SLB ■ Rashad Jeanty ● Eric Henderson
MLB ○ Ahmad Brooks ● Anthony Schlegel
WLB ■ London Johnson ■ Dhani Jones
LCB ■ Johnathan Joseph ○ Blue Adams
SS ○ Chinedum Ndukwu ○ Dexter Jackson
FS ○ Marvin White ● John Busing
RCB ■ Leon Hall ● David Jones

## SPECIALISTS

K ■ Shayne Graham
P ○ Kyle Larson
KR ○ Glenn Holt
PR ● Antonio Chatman
LS ■ Brad St. Louis

## 5-YEAR RECORD C

The highlight of coach Marvin Lewis' five-year reign was the selection of QB **Carson Palmer** (a two-time Pro Bowler) as the No. 1 overall pick in 2003. The lowlight was in 2005, which included MLB Odell Thurman, who was suspended two straight years (2006-07) for violating the NFL's substance abuse policy, and WR Chris Henry, whose continued trouble with the law triggered an eight-game suspension in 2007. The club's inability to select impact players is the reason it has reached the playoffs only once in the last 17 seasons.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	9	11	7	9	7
STUDS	1	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	1	4	1	3	1
BACKUPS	1	2	5	3	6
OTHER TEAMS	3	2	0	0	0
OUT OF NFL	3	3	1	3	0
YEARLY GRADE >	C+	B-	D	B	C-

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 9th

### NEEDS

- 1. DEFENSIVE END** It's a razor-thin call between defensive end and tackle as Cincinnati's top target. But with Justin Smith expected to bolt via free agency, the Bengals need an impact pass rusher to complement incumbent Robert Geathers. Ohio State's Vernon Gholston would be a perfect fit. He can shed blocks, maul the quarterback and blow up running plays.
- 2. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** Domata Peko has been a pleasant surprise as a fourth-round pick in 2006. Now he needs a run-stuffing, pass-rushing wide body next to him. Undersized and aging John Thornton has one year remaining on his contract, but his price tag (\$3.5 million) could make him a cap casualty. USC's Sedrick Ellis should be available in Round 1. He's the kind of quick, physical and powerful player needed at the point of attack. If the club waits until the second round, Texas' Frank Okam could be the guy.
- 3. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** The Bengals locked up their tackle bookends, Levi Jones (left) and Willie Anderson (right), through 2012 and 2011, respectively. However, both are fighting knee injuries. If the club doesn't re-sign unrestricted free agent Stacy Andrews, this position becomes a higher priority. Pittsburgh's Mike McGlynn would be a solid choice.

- 4. CENTER** This position hasn't been the same since Rich Braham's retirement after the 2006 season. There's decent depth with the likes of Eric Ghiaciuc, Alex Stepanovich, Dan Santucci and Nate Livings, but the club lacks a difference-maker at the heart of the offense, and there's concern that Ghiaciuc may not be the long-term answer. Draft possibilities include Notre Dame's John Sullivan, Texas A&M's Cody Wallace and Bowling Green's Kory Lichtensteiger.

- 5. MIDDLE LINEBACKER** Ahmad Brooks was supposed to be the answer, but his progress was severely impeded in 2007 when he missed 14 games with a severe groin injury. Odell Thurman can't be trusted even if he's reinstated after a two-year suspension for violating the NFL's substance abuse policy. Those question marks could cause the club to draft Vanderbilt's Jonathan Goff or Arizona's Spencer Larsen to help plug the middle.

- 6. SAFETY** Free safety Madieu Williams is a free agent and Dexter Jackson is Mr. Inconsistent. Rookies Chinedum Ndukwu and Marvin White came on strong late in the season, but the position needs additional depth. UTEP's Quintin Demps is a ball hawk who makes plays in centerfield and could also give the special teams a boost.

- 7. TIGHT END** If the position hasn't been forgotten in recent years, it's at least been ignored. Cincinnati hasn't drafted a tight end since Matt Schobel in the third round in 2002. Reggie Kelly is one of the NFL's finest blockers, but needs a pass-catching complement down the middle of the field. Louisville's Gary Barnidge is a strong receiver in a pass-happy offense.

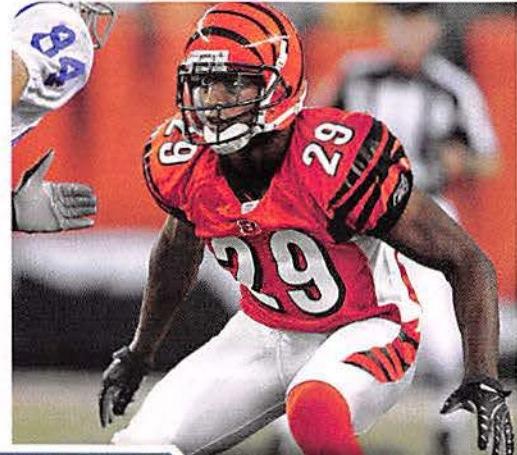
**8. RUNNING BACK** Rudi Johnson's 2008 salary (\$3.2 million) could make him a cap casualty. With Chris Perry and Kenny Irons both coming off injuries, Kenny Watson and DeDe Dorsey need some help. Ohio's Kelvin McRae is a potential late-round steal. He doesn't have great speed, but is a quick, tough, instinctive runner and a reliable receiver out of the backfield.

### OUTLOOK

The No. 1 area of weakness on the Bengals is the defensive line, and it should be addressed with a run-stuffing tackle and pass-rushing end with the top two picks. Defensive tackle Sedrick Ellis or end Vernon Gholston could fall into the Bengals' lap at No. 9 overall, and either one would represent a significant upgrade on the league's 27th-ranked unit in 2007.

It also won't come as a shock if a first-day offensive tackle was selected, while center, middle linebacker and tight end are other positions of concern that need attention. The 2007 acquisition of quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick from St. Louis will cost the team an undisclosed conditional 2008 pick. The Bengals won't rule out a trade down to try and make up for the lost selection.

—Chick Ludwig, Dayton Daily News



## 2007 DRAFT

- 1. LEON HALL / CB** (16 games/10 started) He emerged as a starter and tied for the NFL rookie lead with five interceptions. ► B+
- 2. KENNY IRONS / RB** (0/0) A torn left ACL ruined his rookie year, but his speed and quickness could pay dividends down the road. ► INC
- 4. MARVIN WHITE / FS** (15/3) Became a starter late in the season and made a significant impact with his big hits and fearless style. ► B-
- 5. JEFF ROWE / QB** (0/0) A good leader with accuracy and mobility, he filled the No. 3 role behind Carson Palmer and Ryan Fitzpatrick. ► C
- 6. MATT TOEAINA / DT** (3/0) The Bengals should be ashamed for allowing this fine prospect to be stolen off the practice squad by the Bears. ► B
- 7a. DAN SANTUCCI / C** (2/0) A technically sound blocker who must improve his strength in order to hold up at the point of attack. ► C-
- 7b. CHINEDUM NDUKWE / SS** (14/2) This tall, rangy and aggressive player is ready to blossom into a full-time starter. ► A

# BROWNS

## 5-YEAR RECORD B

Former Browns G.M./coach Butch Davis generally knew raw talent when he saw it, but lacked a sense for whether it was right for the team. Current G.M. Phil Savage has needed three years to phase out Davis' dysfunctional roster. Savage initially had holes in his game as a first-time G.M., but has learned from his mistakes. More recently, he's focused on thorough solutions one position at a time, recognizing that not every hole can be fixed at once. Landing OT Joe Thomas, QB Brady Quinn and CB Eric Wright last year in Savage's third draft was a landmark for the franchise.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	8	6	8	10	7
STUDS	0	1	1	0	1
STARTERS	0	1	1	4	1
BACKUPS	2	0	2	3	3
OTHER TEAMS	4	4	0	1	0
OUT OF NFL	1	0	4	2	2
YEARLY GRADE >	D	B	C	B+	B+

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** Coach Romeo Crennel's three-man front in Cleveland has struggled to get by with adequate to good players, and a difference-maker is sorely needed. The Browns could use a combination player who can make plays against opponents daring not to use double teams. Cleveland lacks a first-round pick in 2008, but will try to trade up. If the team moves high enough, USC's Sedrick Ellis may be available, while another good option is Auburn's Pat Sims.

**2. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** Offenses adjusted to 2006 first-round pick Kamerion Wimbley last season after he recorded 11 sacks as a rookie. The rush linebackers on the other side were Antwan Peek, who fought injuries all year, and Willie McGinest, who is no longer a regular sack threat at age 36. In order to avoid wasting Wimbley's body-bending talent for winning one-on-one matchups, another edge-rushing threat must be added. Virginia Tech's Chris Ellis fits Wimbley's profile. If Ellis is out of reach, Georgia Tech's Darrell Robertson could be an option.

**3. INSIDE LINEBACKER** The Browns have three good but not great linebackers on the inside of their 3-4 defense in Andra Davis, D'Qwell Jackson and Leon Williams. However, Cleveland must consider adding an impact inside linebacker, given the team's ongoing struggles against the run. The Browns may go with UNLV's Beau Bell, who is big, fast and intimidating. South Florida's Ben Moffitt has good size and speed and could be a late-round option.

**4. CORNERBACK** Even though they spent a second-round pick on cornerback Eric Wright last year, the Browns could use a corner with upside who can create competition. Iowa's Charles Godfrey has good size, speed and ball-hawking abilities, while LSU's Chevis Jackson is a middle-round candidate who could compete for a role early.

**5. GUARD** The Browns are in great shape at left guard with Eric Steinbach, but need a developmental player who can play center and guard. A mid- to late-round prospect such as Michigan's Adam Kraus would make sense. He started eight games at guard and four at center while making All-Big Ten for

## FIRST-ROUND PICK NONE

the Wolverines last season. Cleveland might also consider using a later pick on USC's Chilo Rachal, who has good upside.

**6. WIDE RECEIVER** Braylon Edwards emerged as an elite No. 1 wideout in his third year; however, things are unsettled after that. Joe Jurevicius is strong, but ideally he's a No. 3 receiver at this stage of his career. The team won't spend a high pick on a wideout, but will look for value on the board in the later rounds. Someone to watch is Texas' Limas Sweed, who is uncommonly tall, like Jurevicius. Another tall option is Paul Hubbard, who could slip in the draft because he wasn't featured in Wisconsin's offense.

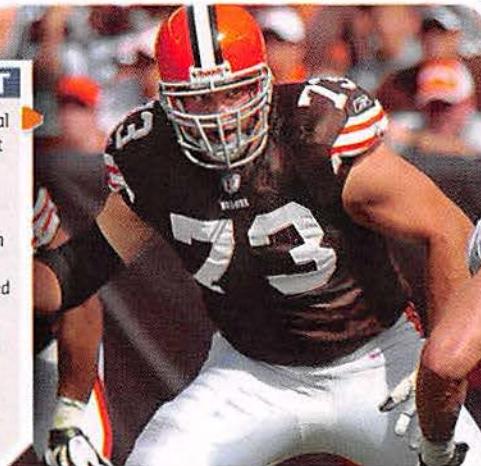
**7. RUNNING BACK** Even if the Browns re-sign Jamal Lewis, they can't count on him as the long-term feature back. The team has solid complementary players in Jason Wright and Jerome Harrison, but neither is a No. 1 back. Michigan's Mike Hart is an interesting option if he falls to the second round.

## OUTLOOK

Play hard—that's the Browns' approach to offseason markets, plain and simple. No matter how much juice is added in free agency (the team figures to be busy again with a robust cap situation), there will be a strong push to draft at least three players who can help immediately. Napping quarterback Brady Quinn last year cost the Browns their 2008 top pick, and G.M. Phil Savage wants to trade back into the first round. If that means again giving up a future first-round selection to have one now, he's all ears.

Internal discussions have coach Romeo Crennel campaigning hard for general defensive help to balance the fact that Savage has spent three of his four first-round picks on offensive players. Two things are certain, though: The "Help Wanted" sign is flashing on the defensive side, and Savage will make at least one interesting trade.

—Steve Doerschuk, Canton Repository



## 2007 DRAFT

- 1a. **JOE THOMAS / OT** (16 games/16 started) Said up front that his goal was the NFL Hall of Fame, and took a strong first step in that direction last season. ► A
- 1b. **Brady Quinn / QB** (1/0) Took only 10 snaps in the last game of the season, but has potential to be the future signal-caller. ► B
2. **Eric Wright / CB** (14/13) Proved he can be a competent man-to-man cover guy, but it's still unclear whether he's shutdown material. ► B
5. **Brandon McDonald / CB** (16/2) The Browns got more than expected out of this confident late bloomer. ► B+
6. **Melita Purcell / DE** (0/0) It's not as if the team expected Hawaiian punch from the fairly barren later rounds of 2007. ► D
- 7a. **Chase Pittman / DE** (0/0) Brings a mean streak, but scares no one with his size or talent. ► D
- 7b. **Syndric Steptoe / WR** (0/0) He's speedy, but good luck being a return prospect on a team that has Joshua Cribbs. ► D

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

QB ■ Derek Anderson  
■ Brady Quinn

FB ■ Lawrence Vickers  
○ Charles Ali

RB ★ Jamal Lewis  
○ Jason Wright

WR ■ Joe Jurevicius  
○ Tim Carter

WR ★ Braylon Edwards  
○ Travis Wilson

TE ★ Kellen Winslow  
■ Steve Heiden

LT ★ Joe Thomas  
○ Nat Dorsey

LG ★ Eric Steinbach  
○ Lennie Friedman

C ■ Hank Fraley  
● Marvin Philip

RG ■ Ryan Tucker  
○ Isaac Sowell

RT ■ Kevin Shaffer  
○ Nat Dorsey

### DEFENSE

LE ○ Orpheus Roye  
● Louis Leonard

NT ■ Shaun Smith  
○ Ethan Kelley

RE ■ Robaire Smith  
○ Simon Fraser

OLB ■ Willie McGinest  
○ Antwan Peek

ILB ■ Andra Davis  
■ Leon Williams

ILB ■ D'Qwell Jackson  
● David McMillan

OLB ■ Kamerion Wimbley  
■ Chaun Thompson

LCB ■ Eric Wright  
■ Brandon McDonald

SS ■ Sean Jones  
○ Nick Sorensen

FS ■ Brodney Pool  
○ Mike Adams

RCB ■ Leigh Bodden  
○ Daven Holly

### SPECIALISTS

K ■ Phil Dawson

P ■ Dave Zastudil

KR ★ Joshua Cribbs

PR ■ Joshua Cribbs

LS ■ Ryan Pontbriand

## COWBOYS



## 5-YEAR RECORD C-

The Cowboys' drafts over the past five years have produced Pro Bowl players in CB Terence Newman, TE Jason Witten, OLB DeMarcus Ware and RB Marion Barber, as well as key contributors in ILB Bradie James and WR Patrick Crayton. While Dallas hasn't gotten much production out of the past two draft classes, some of that is due to the overall talent level being so high that those young players can't get on the field. However, that's no excuse for 2006 first-round pick Bobby Carpenter, who has struggled to earn playing time and is looking like one of the larger busts for the Cowboys over this span.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	7	8	8	8	8
STUDS	1	0	1	0	0
STARTERS	2	3	3	1	1
BACKUPS	0	1	2	4	7
OTHER TEAMS	2	2	1	2	0
OUT OF NFL	2	2	1	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	A	F	A	D	D

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

- ★ Elite
- Solid
- Adequate
- Fringe

## OFFENSE

QB	★ Tony Romo
	○ Brad Johnson
FB	○ Dean Anderson
	● Oliver Hoyle
RB	★ Marion Barber
	● Tyson Thompson
WR	★ Terrell Owens
	○ Sam Hurd
WR	■ Patrick Crayton
	● Miles Austin
TE	★ Jason Witten
	○ Anthony Fasano
LT	■ Flozell Adams
	○ Pat McQuistan
LG	○ Kyle Kosier
	● Joe Berger
C	■ Andre Gurode
	○ Corey Procter
RG	★ Leonard Davis
	● Joe Berger
RT	○ Marc Colombo
	○ Pat McQuistan

## DEFENSE

LE	■ Jay Ratliff
	○ Stephen Bowen
NT	■ Jason Ferguson
	○ Tank Johnson
RE	■ Chris Canty
	○ Jason Hatcher
OLB	★ DeMarcus Ware
	○ Anthony Spencer
ILB	■ Bradie James
	■ Kevin Burnett
ILB	■ Akin Ayodele
	● Bobby Carpenter
OLB	■ Greg Ellis
	○ Anthony Spencer
LCB	■ Anthony Henry
	○ Jacques Reeves
SS	■ Roy Williams
	○ Keith Davis
FS	■ Kam Chancellor
	○ Pat Watkins
RCB	■ Terence Newman
	● Alan Ball

## SPECIALISTS

K	■ Nick Folk
P	★ Mat McBriar
KR	■ Miles Austin
PR	○ Patrick Crayton
LS	■ L.P. Ladouceur

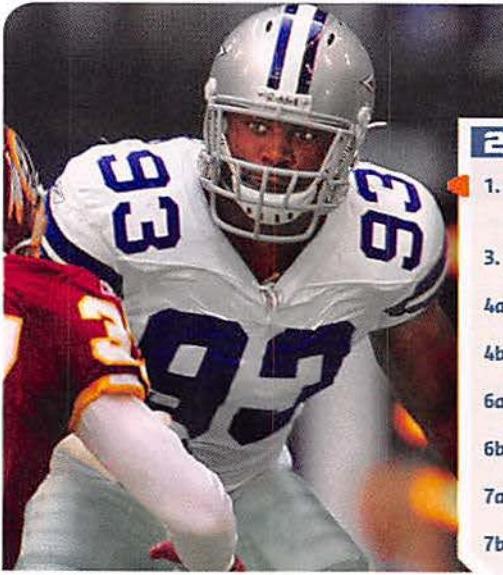
## FIRST-ROUND PICK 22nd &amp; 28th

## NEEDS

**1. RUNNING BACK** ▶ Marion Barber is the Cowboys' starter, but Dallas needs a complementary runner since Julius Jones will likely not return. The Cowboys would like a speedy back with good hands, toughness and the ability to handle blocking duties on third down. This is a great draft for this position, so owner Jerry Jones (an Arkansas graduate) should feel free to resist whatever urge he has to trade up for Darren McFadden. Even at 22nd overall, Dallas will still have strong options in Illinois' Rashard Mendenhall, Oregon's Jonathan Stewart and Arkansas' Felix Jones.

**2. WIDE RECEIVER** ▶ With Terrell Owens turning 35 in December and Terry Glenn's future in doubt, the Cowboys need depth here. Dallas would love to land a receiver who can stretch the field and create more room underneath for Owens and tight end Jason Witten to operate. If the Cowboys use a first-round pick on a wideout, Michigan's Mario Manningham and LSU's Early Doucet are good fits. Later-round possibilities include Houston's Donnie Avery, California's Lavelle Hawkins and Florida's Andre Caldwell.

**3. CORNERBACK** ▶ The Cowboys are pleased with Anthony Henry and Terence Newman, but with so many NFL teams using three-, four- and five-man receiver formations, they need to upgrade their nickel and dime cornerbacks. It looks to be a down year for this position, so Dallas might prefer to make this a lower priority. Indiana's Tracy Porter, Tennessee State's Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie and Colorado's Terrence Wheatley are all players who might fit into the Cowboys' plans and could be available after the first round.



**4. QUARTERBACK** ▶ Dallas has been fortunate that Tony Romo has never missed a start because of injury in his two seasons as the starting quarterback. But with Brad Johnson turning 40 when the 2008 season starts, it's clear the Cowboys need a young player to groom behind Romo. Michigan's Chad Henne and Tennessee's Erik Ainge are possibilities, as is Delaware's Joe Flacco, who has a terrific arm and good size.

**5. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** ▶ Teams can never have enough pass-rushers in a 3-4 defense. The Cowboys spent a first-round pick on Anthony Spencer last year, but Greg Ellis is getting older, which means it's time to start thinking about grooming a replacement. UCLA's Bruce Davis and Michigan's Shawn Crable have the pass-rush skills and size to play on the outside.

**6. INSIDE LINEBACKER** ▶ With Bobby Carpenter looking like a first-round bust and Kevin Burnett having just two years left on his contract, Dallas needs to fortify its inside linebackers. There are currently no long-term answers behind starters Bradie James and Akin Ayodele. With time to develop players, the Cowboys wouldn't have to make a move here until the fifth or sixth round.

## OUTLOOK

Few general managers like to trade as much as Dallas' Jerry Jones. And with two first-round picks (the other coming from Cleveland in last year's trade that brought quarterback Brady Quinn to the Browns), expect Jones to be dealing again. If the two selections don't supply the needed ammunition to move up to get Darren McFadden, Jones may deal away a first-rounder in an attempt to grab multiple picks in the second and third rounds.

If Dallas keeps its first-round choices, look for holes to be filled at cornerback and receiver. The Cowboys will likely draft a tackle or guard in the sixth or seventh round in hopes of future development. The team also should use this draft to find an adequate backup for quarterback Tony Romo.

—Jacques Taylor, Dallas Morning News

## 2007 DRAFT

1. **ANTHONY SPENCER / OLB** (16 games/6 started) Didn't play much, but that was more a result of being behind stars Greg Ellis and DeMarcus Ware. ►C
3. **James Marten / OT** (0/0) Wasn't expected to play last season and didn't, but could be in the team's future plans. ►D
- 4a. **Isaiah Stanback / WR** (2/0) Spent much of training camp recovering from a foot injury that limited his contributions. ►INC
- 4b. **Doug Free / OT** (1/0) Played just one game this year, as his status is similar to Marten's. ►D
- 6a. **Nick Folk / K** (16/0) Had a memorable game-winner against Buffalo and a lot of other big kicks that helped Dallas win 13 games. ►A
- 6b. **Deon Anderson / FB** (8/4) Could be a starter this season due to his good blocking and adequate receiving skills. ►B
- 7a. **Courtney Brown / CB** (8/0) The Cowboys like his potential as a role player down the road. ►D
- 7b. **Alan Ball / CB** (2/0) Still has a shot for future contributions. ►D



# BRONCOS

## 5-YEAR RECORD

C-

The NFL is a what-have-you-done-for-me-lately enterprise. In the Broncos' case, starters at left tackle, defensive tackle and defensive end all may emerge from last year's draft. Meanwhile, the 2006 selections may turn out to be one of the franchise's best ever, with QB Jay Cutler, WR Brandon Marshall and TE Tony Scheffler all a huge part of the club's future core. But the 2003-05 drafts fall just shy of a disaster, with only MLB D.J. Williams considered an above-average talent among the 26 picks.

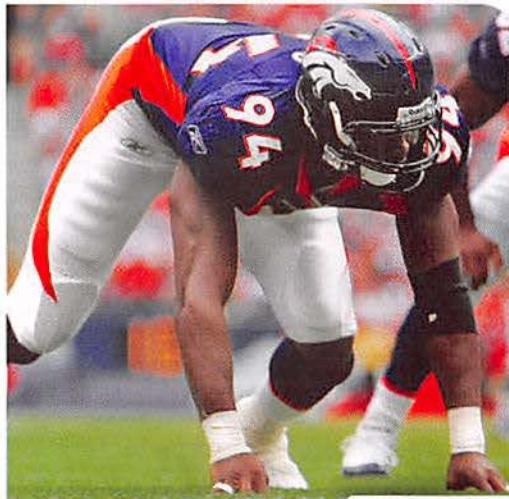
	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	10	10	6	7	4
STUDS	0	1	0	0	0
STARTERS	0	0	1	5	0
BACKUPS	0	0	3	0	4
OTHER TEAMS	2	2	0	2	0
OUT OF NFL	8	7	2	0	0
YEARLY GRADE >	F	D	C+	A	C

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** Nowhere over the last several seasons have the Broncos tinkered and failed as much as the middle of their front four. With the No. 12 pick, Denver may have a shot at USC's Sedrick Ellis, who could play nose tackle right away. A trade for help in the middle is also a possibility, particularly if Shaun Rogers gets his wish and is made available by the Lions.

**2. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** Denver has some versatility here, depending on what it chooses to do with D.J. Williams. In his first year manning the middle, Williams led the AFC in tackles, but his best position is probably at weak side. The Broncos could go with USC's Keith Rivers as a weakside option, but Penn State's Dan Connor could be the best linebacker at any position available in the draft.

**3. SAFETY** Hamza Abdullah took over for the injured Nick Ferguson midway through last season and showed enough to put himself in position to start this year, but he remains inexperienced. The Broncos need additional speed and range on the back end. Barring a free-agent move, Denver will get a first-day safety in all likelihood, whether it's Miami's Kenny Phillips



## 2007 DRAFT

- JARVIS MOSS / DE** (6 games/1 started) An incomplete would be more accurate, as Moss twisted his knee during the preseason and later broke his ankle, cutting short his rookie season. ► C
- Tim Crowder / DE** (13/1) Gained valuable experience and played extensively as a rookie. He has the physical tools to be an every-down performer, but his technique needs work. ► B
- Ryan Harris / OT** (11/0) Needed back surgery in the preseason and didn't play on offense, except during goal-line situations. He's smart with quick feet and is the projected starter at left tackle next season. ► INC
- Marcus Thomas / DT** (16/5) Hit the rookie wall, but has emerged as a foundation piece in the middle of the defensive line. ► B-



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 12th

or (if the team shoots lower) LSU's Craig Steltz or Alabama's Simeon Castille.

**4. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** Last year's third-round pick, Ryan Harris, is the favorite to start at left tackle in 2008, despite appearing mainly on special teams in 11 games last season. But right tackle Erik Pears is more of a stopgap option than a long-term building block, and the Broncos need another developmental prospect capable of starting in the near future and serving in the short term as a swing backup.

**5. WIDE RECEIVER** Brandon Marshall emerged as a star last season, while Brandon Stokley is among the best slot receivers in the game. And if Javon Walker returns healthy from his knee injury, the Broncos have one of the top trios in the league. But Walker went public with his dissatisfaction about how he fits within the team's scheme and his contract may be cost-prohibitive, so Denver could use another wideout to be safe.

**6. DEFENSIVE END** The Broncos are fairly set as a group here. However, the team's best run-stuffing end, Ebenezer Ekuban, is coming off a major Achilles injury, while John Engelberger is a high-motor player but hardly a star. Denver could use another big-bodied end to help against the run.

**7. RUNNING BACK** The addition of Travis Henry was supposed to provide the vision, cutback ability and toughness that makes Denver's zone-blocking scheme so lethal when operated properly. However, a knee injury and off-the-field issues puts his future in doubt. Selvin Young and Andre Hall provide excellent depth and big-play ability, but the Broncos need a more punishing runner who can move the chains in short yardage if Henry leaves.

**8. PUNTER** The Broncos have been able to identify young talent at this position; they just can't hang onto it. It may be time to expend another draft pick on someone such as Georgia Tech's Durant Brooks to bolster the special teams, especially with the club having two fourth- and fifth-round picks at its disposal and no real experienced punter currently on the roster.

## OUTLOOK

Team owner Pat Bowlen said early this offseason that the Broncos have seen the enemy, and it's themselves. He was talking about overall attitude, but Bowlen just as well may have been speaking of the club's recent draft history. Too many missed picks and the dealing away of choices have finally caught up to the club.

The Broncos could actually try to stockpile picks this year instead of trading them. It wouldn't be a shock to see Denver move down a few spots from No. 12 if it can recover its missing third-round pick (which was dealt to the Vikings last year so the team could move up and take defensive tackle Marcus Thomas) in the process.

—Lee Rasizer, Rocky Mountain News

## OFFENSE

QB ■ Jay Cutler  
○ Patrick Ramsey

FB ○ Cecil Sapp  
○ Paul Smith

RB ■ Travis Henry  
○ Selvin Young

WR ■ Brandon Marshall  
○ Glenn Martinez

WR ■ Javon Walker  
■ Brandon Stokley

TE ■ Daniel Graham  
■ Tony Scheffler

LT ○ Ryan Harris  
○ Erik Pears

LG ■ Ben Hamilton  
○ Chris Myers

C ■ Tom Nalen  
○ Chris Myers

RG ○ Montrae Holland  
● P.J. Alexander

RT ○ Chris Kuper  
○ Erik Pears

## DEFENSE

LE ○ Ebenezer Ekuban  
○ Tim Crowder

DT ○ Marcus Thomas  
○ Kenny Peterson

DT ○ Alvin McKinley  
● Stephen Harris

RE ○ Jarvis Moss  
■ Elvis Dumervil

SLB ○ Nate Webster  
● Louis Green

MLB ■ D.J. Williams  
● Jordan Beck

WLB ○ Jamie Winborn  
○ Louis Green

LCB ■ Champ Bailey  
○ Karl Payton

SS ○ Hamza Abdullah  
● Roderick Rogers

FS ■ John Lynch  
● Steve Cargile

RCB ○ Dré Bly  
○ Dominique Foxworth

## SPECIALISTS

K ■ Jason Elam

P ○ Sam Paulescu

KR ○ Andre Hall

PR ○ Glenn Martinez

LS ■ Mike Leach

## LIONS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

## OFFENSE

QB	■ Jon Kitna ● Drew Stanton
FB	● Jon Bradley ○ Casey FitzSimmons
RB	■ Kevin Jones ○ T.J. Duckett
WR	■ Calvin Johnson ○ Mike Furrey
WR	■ Roy Williams ○ Shaun McDonald
TE	■ Dan Campbell ○ Sean McHugh
LT	○ Jeff Backus ● Jonathan Scott
LG	○ Edwin Muitalo ● Manny Ramirez
C	■ Dominic Raiola ● Blaine Saipala
RG	● Stephen Peterman ○ Frank Davis
RT	● Jonathan Scott ● Blaine Saipala

## DEFENSE

LE	○ Jared DeVries ● Ikaika Alama-Francis
NT	■ Shaun Rogers ● Langston Moore
UT	■ Cory Redding ● Shaun Cody
RE	○ Dewayne White ● Corey Smith
SLB	○ Paris Lenon ● Alex Lewis
MLB	● Teddy Lehman ● Buster Davis
WLB	■ Ernie Sims ● Anthony Cannon
LCB	○ Keith Smith ● Dovonte Edwards
SS	○ Daniel Bullocks ● Kenoy Kennedy
FS	○ Gerald Alexander ● Greg Blue
RCB	○ Travis Fisher ● Ramzee Robinson

## SPECIALISTS

K	■ Jason Hanson
P	■ Nick Harris
KR	○ Avelion Cason
PR	● Troy Walters
LS	■ Don Muhlbach

## 5-YEAR RECORD D-

Two first-round picks, WRs Charles Rogers (who went second overall in 2003) and Mike Williams (10th, 2005), are no longer with the team, while two second-round selections, LBs Boss Bailey (34th, 2003) and Teddy Lehman (37th, 2004), may not return next season. Aside from 2006 Pro Bowl WR Roy Williams, the Lions have done a miserable job in building through the draft over the past five years. Of the 30 picks from 2003-06, 15 are gone, and only eight of the 38 selections in the last five years are likely to start this season.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	11	6	6	7	8
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	2	2	0	1	2
BACKUPS	0	3	3	4	4
OTHER TEAMS	3	1	1	0	1
OUT OF NFL	6	0	2	2	1
YEARLY GRADE >	F	B	F	D	D

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 15th

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE END** The Tampa 2 system will collapse if the front four (especially the ends) can't get reliable pressure on the quarterback, and that's exactly why the Lions were among the league's worst in nearly every significant defensive category last year. The Kalimba Edwards experiment is an official failure, and Detroit doesn't have a pure pass rusher worthy of starting status. Right now, Auburn's Quentin Groves appears to be the type of player the Lions need, but he might be a reach when they draft in the No. 15 spot. Selecting a quality pass rusher in later rounds isn't likely.

**2. MIDDLE LINEBACKER** Another key for the Tampa 2 is a speedy middle linebacker who can get downfield but also has the power to stop a running back or receiver upon impact in the short passing game. The Lions don't have a defined starter at this position and could target Penn State's Dan Connor in the first round.

**3. CORNERBACK** The Lions will have a hard time passing on South Florida's Mike Jenkins if they're determined to fill this position in the first round. Detroit is desperate to fill both starting cornerback spots and need an athlete with speed, instincts and toughness. Jenkins has all those qualities. Another name to keep in mind is Troy's Leodis McKelvin. Depending on free agency moves, the Lions might be forced to spend two or three draft picks on this position.

**4. RIGHT TACKLE** Pass protection has been an issue the last two years and not all of it is the fault of the system. While the Lions will make some scheme adjustments, they need to fill a vacancy at right tackle, because it's unlikely that Damien Woody will be re-signed. While there are a lot of defensive needs, Detroit might be tempted to take a look at players such as USC's Sam Baker or Vanderbilt's Chris Williams. The Lions would likely start whomever they draft on the right side and then, if he develops into a top-level pass protector, move him to the left side and put Jeff Backus on the right.

**5. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** Ernie Sims is solid on the weak side and former middle linebacker Paris Lenon is being moved to the strong side, but the Lions still need to find some athletes to push Lenon for the starting spot. Detroit is more likely to fill this need in the middle rounds.

**6. TIGHT END** The Lions have been happy with Dan Campbell, but he's going into his 10th season and has a lingering elbow problem. Detroit will be looking for a player with strong blocking skills and the agility to get open. Downfield speed isn't as important as a player with good instincts who understands zone defenses.

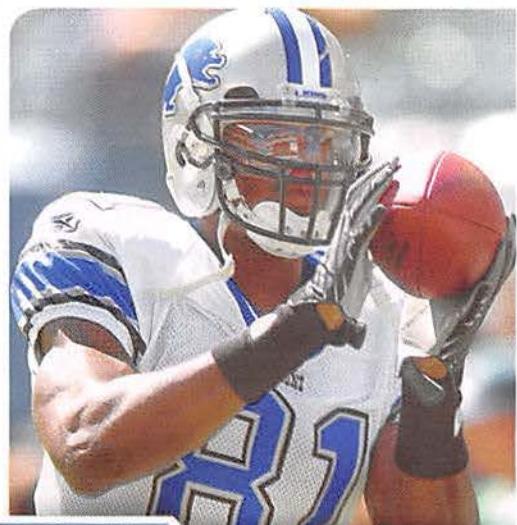
## OUTLOOK

The Lions are so lacking in defensive talent that anything short of a grand slam in the draft will be

crippling to the team. If Detroit fills the right tackle spot in free agency, it's possible all picks could be spent on defense, where every position requires an upgrade at both starter and backup. The Lions pick 15th overall, so getting a dominant pass-rushing end is unlikely. It's more probable that Detroit will go after a middle linebacker or cornerback, positions that will be plentiful in the middle of the first round.

Detroit could still swing some draft-day deals involving its own veterans, most notably defensive tackle Shaun Rogers and wideout Roy Williams, who both offer good value. The Lions would prefer to get a veteran defensive player in a deal. Since that will be difficult to pull off, team president Matt Millen will try to stockpile some picks. Detroit must come out of this draft with at least two, if not three, quality starters on defense.

—Tom Kowalski, Booth Newspapers



## 2007 DRAFT

- CALVIN JOHNSON / WR** (15 games/10 started) Made some big plays last season but wasn't a consistent playmaker and didn't live up to his draft status. ► C
- Drew Stanton / QB** (0/0) Was on injured reserve all year with a knee sprain and lost a good opportunity to develop. ► INC
- Ikaika Alama-Francis / DE** (6/0) Despite problems on the line, he couldn't work his way into the lineup until late last season. ► D
- Gerald Alexander / S** (16/16) An injury forced him to step into the starting spot and he did a decent job, but still made too many rookie mistakes. ► C
- A.J. Davis / CB** (0/0) Didn't have enough skills to make it out of training camp. ► F
- Manny Ramirez / G** (1/0) Remained on the roster for his long-range potential, but was only active for the final two games. ► D
- Johnny Baldwin / LB** (3/0) Struggled in the system and was cut in training camp; he ended up sticking with the Chiefs. ► D
- Ramzee Robinson / CB** (6/0) Bounced between practice squad and active roster, but didn't see any significant action. ► D



# PACKERS

## 5-YEAR RECORD

**C**

The difference from the first two years to the final three is reflected in the change in general manager from Mike Sherman to Ted Thompson. Executing 34 picks over three drafts, Thompson has built the team from the ground up. The only potential star out of the group is 2006 second-round WR Greg Jennings, as Thompson hasn't hit on enough future starters to make this team a bona fide contender year after year. To raise his draft record, Thompson needs LB A.J. Hawk, DT Johnny Jolly and 2007 first-round DT Justin Harrell to excel.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	9	6	11	12	11
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	1	2	2	4	2
BACKUPS	0	0	3	4	7
OTHER TEAMS	3	0	1	1	1
OUT OF NFL	5	4	5	3	1
YEARLY GRADE >	D-	D	C	A-	B

## NEEDS

**1. GUARD** By the start of next season, there's a good chance Daryn Colledge will back up Chad Clifton at left tackle and Jason Spitz will be the No. 2 center. Packers G.M. Ted Thompson has been willing to sacrifice size for athletic ability, but may have to give in a little to get a competent run blocker. There won't be many options at the 30th overall selection, so he'll probably have to fill the spot with a second-day pick.

**2. CORNERBACK** During the 2008 season, Al Harris will turn 34 and Charles Woodson turns 32. If Thompson wants to make another championship run, he needs to have talent waiting in the wings. There is a definite need for a promising cover man who can be groomed and learn from the veterans.

**3. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** This is more of an insurance need. Chad Clifton and Mark Tauscher are getting older, although they were steady anchors on the line last year. Eventually, they'll have to be replaced, and now is the time to think about drafting someone to do so. USC's Sam Baker, Kansas' Anthony Collins and Pittsburgh's Jeff Otah are all intriguing options.

**4. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** The team seems settled in the middle with Nick Barnett, but Green Bay could use some outside help. Landing a big linebacker with speed might be the final piece of the puzzle for a defense that ranked 11th in the league last year. There are a number of prospects who might interest Thompson, including Auburn's Quentin Groves, Tennessee's Jerod Mayo and Maryland's Erin Henderson.

**5. RUNNING BACK** Ryan Grant was terrific last season and elevated the running game almost on his own. But he's a physical runner who sometimes takes unnecessary hits because he doesn't get his pads down. If there is a blazing back

with good hands available, Thompson needs to jump on him. Someone such as West Virginia's Steve Slaton might fit the bill.

**6. DEFENSIVE END** While the team seems stocked at this position, it can never hurt to have too many ends. The ideal player would be a special teams demon with exceptional pass-rush skills. The Packers may address this in the middle rounds.

**7. LONG SNAPPER** Rob Davis will turn 40 during the 2008 season and, although coach Mike McCarthy has expressed a desire to bring him back, some competition must be brought in. Davis doesn't get downfield and make tackles the way he used to and had a few bad snapping moments last season.

**8. QUARTERBACK** This isn't as low on the priority scale as many think, as one of these seasons, Brett Favre is going to retire. Thompson likes to develop young quarterbacks and could take a flier on someone in the middle to late rounds.

## OUTLOOK

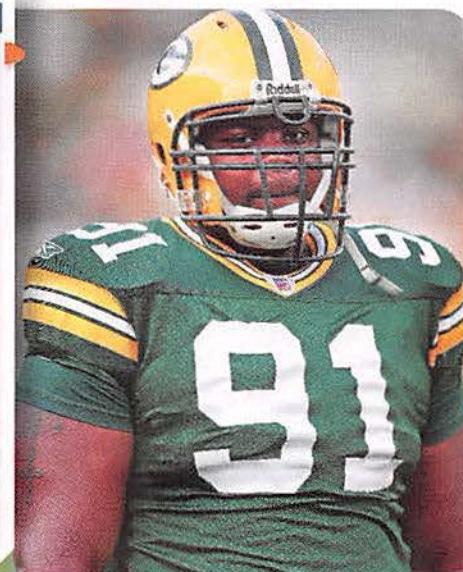
With a relatively young roster and lots of depth, Thompson is sitting in a good position after his team made it all the way to the NFC Championship Game last season. His No. 1 focus in the draft has to be creating the kind of competition on the offensive line that was seen on the defensive line prior to last season.

One thing is for certain: Thompson will take the best player available regardless of position. The Packers need to continue adding depth in the secondary and at linebacker. Thompson's goal should be to get two starters out of this draft: an offensive lineman and a playmaker on defense.

—Tom Silverstein, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

## 2007 DRAFT

- 1. JUSTIN HARRELL / DT** (7 games/2 started) Wasn't mature enough to get on the field until late in the year, and didn't show much then. ► D
- 2. Brandon Jackson / RB** (11/3) Couldn't hold the starting job and might be better suited as a third-down back. ► D
- 3a. James Jones / WR** (16/9) Faded down the stretch, but far exceeded many scouts' expectations. ► B
- 3b. Aaron Rouse / S** (11/3) Showed outstanding ability and deserved to play more than he did. ► C
- 4. Allen Barbre / G** (7/0) A great athlete who could be better if he thinks faster. ► D
- 5. David Clowney / WR** (0/0) Plucked off the Packers' practice squad by the New York Jets. ► F
- 6a. Korey Hall / FB** (14/10) Played linebacker in college, but was switched to fullback and started 10 games. ► B+
- 6b. Desmond Bishop / LB** (10/0) Played well on special teams and backed up Nick Barnett. ► C-
- 6c. Mason Crosby / K** (16/0) Even though the Packers had a kicker, they found a better one late in the draft. ► A
- 7a. DeShawn Wynn / RB** (7/4) The team got a little out of him in 2007, but '08 will determine if he has what it takes. ► C-
- 7b. Clark Harris / TE** (0/0) Didn't even merit a practice squad spot. ► F



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

QB ■ Brett Favre  
○ Aaron Rodgers

FB ○ Kory Hall  
● John Kuhn

RB ■ Ryan Grant  
● Brandon Jackson

WR ■ Donald Driver  
○ James Jones

WR ■ Greg Jennings  
● Ruell Martin

TE ○ Donald Lee  
● Bubba Franks

LT ■ Chad Clifton  
● Daryn Colledge

LG ○ Alien Barbre  
● Daryn Colledge

C ○ Scott Wells  
● Jason Spitz

RG ○ Jason Spitz  
● Jarius Coston

RT ■ Mark Tauscher  
● Tony Moll

### DEFENSE

LE ★ Aaron Kampman  
● Michael Montgomery

DT ■ Ryan Pickett  
● Justin Harrell

DT ○ Johnny Jolly  
● Colin Cole

RE ○ Cullen Jenkins  
● Kabeer Gbaja-Biamila

OLB ○ Brady Poppinga  
● Tracy White

MLB ★ Nick Barnett  
● Desmond Bishop

OLB ○ A.J. Hawk  
● Tracy White

LCB ■ Charles Woodson  
○ Tramon Williams

SS ○ Atari Bigby  
● Charlie Peprah

FS ○ Nick Collins  
○ Aaron Rouse

RCB ■ Al Harris  
● Will Blackmon

### SPECIALISTS

K ■ Mason Crosby

P ○ Jon Ryan

KR ○ Tramon Williams

PR ■ Will Blackmon

LS ○ Rob Davis

# TEXANS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

<b>OFFENSE</b>	
QB	■ Matt Schaub ■ Sage Rosenfels
FB	■ Vonta Leach ○ Jameel Cook
RB	■ Ahman Green ■ Ron Dayne
WR	■ Kevin Walter ○ Jacoby Jones
WR	★ Andre Johnson ■ Andre Davis
TE	■ Owen Daniels ○ Mark Bruener
LT	○ Ephraim Salaam ● Rashad Butler
LG	■ Chester Pitts ● Brandon Frye
C	○ Steve McKinney ● Chris White
RG	■ Fred Weary ● Mike Brisiel
RT	■ Eric Winston ● Rashad Butler

### DEFENSE

LE	○ Anthony Weaver ○ Earl Cochran
DT	■ Amobi Okoye ○ Anthony Maddox
DT	■ Travis Johnson ○ Jeff Zgonina
RE	■ Mario Williams ○ N.D. Kalu
SLB	■ Danny Clark ○ Charlie Anderson
MLB	■ DeMeco Ryans ○ Zac Diles
WLB	■ Morlon Greenwood ○ Zac Diles
LCB	■ Fred Bennett ○ Jamar Fletcher
SS	■ C.C. Brown ■ Glenn Earl
FS	■ Will Demps ○ Jason Simmons
RCB	■ Von Hutchins ○ Demarcus Faggins

### SPECIALISTS

K	■ Kris Brown
P	■ Matt Turk
KR	■ Andre Davis
PR	■ Jacoby Jones
LS	■ Bryan Pittman

## 5-YEAR RECORD C

The Texans have been set back by their lack of second-round picks in three of the last four years. They are also still paying for terrible drafts in 2003 and '04. Houston had 19 selections over those two years, and 11 of those players are already out of the NFL. Cornerback Dunta Robinson and WR Andre Johnson are the most memorable picks still on the roster. The choices seem to have improved since coach Gary Kubiak and general manager Rick Smith came on board two years ago.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	10	9	6	7	7
STUDS	1	0	0	1	0
STARTERS	0	1	2	3	2
BACKUPS	0	2	2	1	5
OTHER TEAMS	3	1	2	1	0
OUT OF NFL	6	5	0	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	D	D-	C-	B	B

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 18th

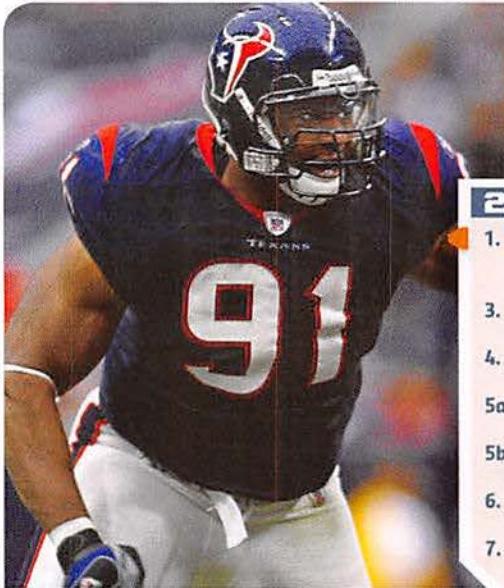
### NEEDS

**1. CORNERBACK** This was a solid area for the Texans last season until they lost Dunta Robinson with a serious knee and hamstring injury. Now that he is expected to miss at least half of the 2008 season, the position moves to the forefront of the team's draft needs. Houston could look for a corner early, especially with the talent expected from this year's draft, which includes Troy's Leodis McKelvin and Boston College's DeJuan Tribble.

**2. DEFENSIVE END** Despite drafting a defensive lineman in the first round during each of the past three drafts, the Texans still need to bolster their pass rush with an end who can start opposite Mario Williams. If Houston can upgrade with a young, quick pass-rusher, the team's blitzes and four-man rushes may finally be successful. Miami's Calais Campbell could be a steal in the first round if he's still available at No. 18, while USC's Lawrence Jackson would be solid if his knee injury doesn't prove too serious.

**3. LEFT TACKLE** The Texans must find a young talent able to take over for Ephraim Salaam when ready. Houston may look closely at some of the smaller, quicker linemen such as Rutgers' Pedro Sosa, UTEP's O'Neill Cousins or Virginia Tech's Duane Brown in the middle of the draft.

**4. SAFETY** Injuries hurt the Texans this season at safety, a position where they have consistently lacked playmakers. If Miami's Kenny Phillips is available in the first round, Houston could take a shot at drafting him. Tennessee's Jonathan Hefney is a good prospect in the later rounds because of his



ability to play cornerback or safety, while Alabama's Simeon Castille is also a possibility.

**5. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** The Texans could use more speed at outside linebacker to aid in the pass rush. Danny Clark, who had a solid 2007 season, is a free agent, as is 2004 sixth-round pick Charlie Anderson. Houston drafted Zac Diles last year and likes him, but he lacks height for an outside linebacker. Possibilities later in the draft include Auburn's Quentin Groves, Penn State's Dan Connor and Oregon State's Derrick Doggett.

**6. RUNNING BACK** Houston has a plethora of running backs going into the offseason. However, that's also been the case the last two years, and down the stretch practice squad players have ended up starting. Even though Ahman Green is back and will likely be joined by Ron Dayne, Darius Walker and Chris Taylor, the Texans must find a running back capable of competing for a starting job. Texas' Jamaal Charles and West Virginia's Steve Slaton are underclassmen with upside.

### OUTLOOK

The Texans only have a few positions they don't need to address in the draft—tight end, quarterback and wide receiver. Aside from those three, they should be open to drafting any position. Last year, the team went with the best athlete at No. 10 and chose Amobi Okoye, which turned out to be a smart pick. The Texans should take the same approach into this draft as well, even with their top priorities resting at cornerback, defensive end, offensive tackle and safety. Houston is unlikely to move up in the draft, but moving down is a possibility.

This is a franchise that's still trying to build itself through the draft, and has a general manager in Rick Smith who does well at finding talent outside of the first round. Despite that, the Texans gave up their second-round pick in 2007 and '08 to the Atlanta Falcons as a part of the trade for Matt Schaub. If a quality deal comes along that allows Houston to pick up a second-round selection, Smith will likely take it.

—Megan Manfull, *Houston Chronicle*

### 2007 DRAFT

1. **AMOBI OKOYE / DT** (16 games/14 started) The Texans grabbed the best defensive player on the board, and he proved his worth until hitting the rookie wall late last season. ► A
3. **Jacoby Jones / WR** (14/3) Has great speed and playmaking ability, but a shoulder injury derailed a promising start. ► C
4. **Fred Bennett / CB** (14/8) Emerged as a quality starter with a knack for picking off passes. ► A
- 5a. **Brandon Harrison / CB** (0/0) Landed on injured reserve and hasn't contributed yet. ► F
- 5b. **Brandon Frye / OT** (0/0) Didn't play at all last season, but was able to make the adjustment from tackle to guard. ► D
6. **Kasey Studdard / G** (3/0) Struggled in limited playing time and must make big strides in the offseason to stay on the team. ► D
7. **Zac Diles / LB** (11/0) Was the surprise of last year's class, quickly winning the backup job to DeMeco Ryans. ► B

# COLTS

## 5-YEAR RECORD B

The draft has become Indianapolis' foundation, as team president Bill Polian and his personnel department have stocked the roster with not only young talent but difference-makers. The past five drafts have produced the NFL's 2007 Defensive Player of the Year (S Bob Sanders), one of the league's top edge pass rushers (DE Robert Mathis), a Pro Bowl-caliber tight end (Dallas Clark), a pair of solid cornerbacks (Marlin Jackson and Kelvin Hayden), a tail-back who has rushed for at least 1,000 yards in each of his first two seasons (Joseph Addai) and an ideal slot receiver (Anthony Gonzalez).

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	8	9	10	7	9
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	2	2	2	4	2
BACKUPS	0	1	3	3	7
OTHER TEAMS	3	4	2	0	0
OUT OF NFL	3	2	3	0	0
YEARLY GRADE >	B	B	C+	A	B

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE END** ▶ Veterans Dwight Freeney and Robert Mathis form one of the top pass-rush tandems in the NFL. But depth (more specifically a possible short-term fill-in) is needed. Everything about coach Tony Dungy's defensive philosophy revolves around the front four being able to exert pressure on the quarterback. It might be difficult to land a quality pass rusher at the bottom of the second round, but team president Bill Polian could try to move up if the right player starts sliding to him. Auburn's Quentin Groves is suited for this defense.

**2. TIGHT END** ▶ Dallas Clark is one of the NFL's best and a perfect fit for the system; however, help is needed. Ben Utecht is a restricted free agent and will likely be offered a one-year qualifying offer, but he has been inconsistent and prone to injury. The offense needs a backup for Clark who can hold up as a blocker but also get downfield and be an option for



## 2007 DRAFT

- 1. Anthony Gonzalez / WR** (13 games/9 started) Despite missing time with a dislocated thumb, he was an invaluable contributor at an injury-depleted position. ▶ B
- 2. Tony Ugoh / OT** (11/11) Pressed into action by the retirement of Tarik Glenn, he proved to be a solid successor. ▶ B+
- 3a. Dante Hughes / CB** (10/0) Injuries limited his effectiveness, as his contributions were primarily on special teams and in nickel packages. ▶ C-
- 3b. Quinn Pitcock / DT** (9/1) A nonfactor early, he gradually grew into a valuable component in the rotation. ▶ B-
- 4a. Brannon Condren / S** (8/0) Got few opportunities behind Bob Sanders and Antoine Bethea. ▶ D
- 4b. Clint Session / LB** (13/1) A solid special teams player, he responded well in his only defensive start with two INTs at San Diego. ▶ B
- 5a. Ray Hall / WR** (3/0) Was in line to emerge as a special teams standout before suffering a season-ending shoulder injury. ▶ D
- 5b. Michael Coe / CB** (6/0) Still an unknown as a corner, but showed a knack for making plays on special teams. ▶ C
- 7. Keyunta Dawson / DT** (16/4) Undersized, but still a viable contributor at tackle. ▶ C+

## FIRST-ROUND PICK NONE

quarterback Peyton Manning. Notre Dame's John Carlson might be an option if he starts slipping down the board.

**3. RUNNING BACK** ▶ The team would be wise to search for a better backup to Joseph Addai. Kenton Keith had flashes, but didn't show he was a complete back. The team must keep Addai fresh, which requires an occasional breather. Illinois' Rashard Mendenhall would seem to be an ideal fit in the offense, but it's unclear if he'll be available by the time Indianapolis picks in the second round.

**4. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** ▶ Tony Ugoh, last year's second-round selection, stepped in and did a solid job on the left side after three-time Pro Bowler Tarik Glenn retired. On the right side, Ryan Diem played well despite battling a knee injury much of the season. Depth is a concern, as the team always wants to make certain the edges of its line are secure.

**5. INSIDE LINEBACKER** ▶ There's no proven young backup behind starter Gary Brackett. Veteran Rob Morris could move back inside, but is coming off a season-ending ACL injury and has moved to the strong side. The personnel staff isn't likely to use its top pick to address this spot, as it's been confident in the ability to discover a competent player in the middle rounds.

**6. WIDE RECEIVER** ▶ Even if Marvin Harrison returns to form, the team needs another player to develop. Harrison will be 36 at the start of the season and missed 11 games in 2007 with a left-knee injury. The Colts need to find an outside threat who will eventually pair with two-time Pro Bowl selection Reggie Wayne. That will enable 2007 first-round pick Anthony Gonzalez to concentrate on the slot, which is his natural position.

**7. PUNTER** ▶ Hunter Smith will be 31 at the start of the 2008 season and an unrestricted free agent in two years. He remains a solid situational punter, but is coming off an inconsistent season. Smith's 41.9 gross average was his worst since 2002.

## OUTLOOK

The team has been able to remain one of the league's elite because the coaching staff and personnel department work so well together. The end game sees the roster remaining stocked with young players even though the team generally loses a handful of veteran free agents each year. Polian's track record has been to use early picks on true impact players, then use the remainder of the draft to find a few gems. Look for him to remain true to form.

Polian will not allow the offense to take a step back, and could look for a backup running back, tight end or receiver. The priority, though, might be to further stock the defensive line. That's the most important area of Tony Dungy's defense, and a third pass rusher is needed. The team won't have a first-round pick after trading it to San Francisco last year for the 49ers' 2007 second-rounder, which delivered offensive tackle Tony Ugoh.

—Mike Chappell, Indianapolis Star



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

QB ★ Peyton Manning  
 ○ Jim Sorgi

RB ■ Joseph Addai  
 ○ Kenton Keith

WR ★ Reggie Wayne  
 ○ Devin Aromashodu

WR ■ Marvin Harrison  
 ■ Anthony Gonzalez

TE ★ Dallas Clark  
 ○ Bryan Fletcher

TE ○ Ben Utecht

LT ■ Tony Ugoh  
 ○ Michael Toussaint

LG ■ Ryan Lilja

C ★ Jeff Saturday  
 ○ Dylan Gandy

RG ■ Jake Scott  
 ○ Dylan Gandy

RT ■ Ryan Diem  
 ○ Charlie Johnson

### DEFENSE

LE ■ Robert Mathis  
 ○ Josh Thomas

DT ■ Raheem Brock  
 ○ Keyunta Dawson

DT ■ Ed Johnson  
 ○ Quinn Pitcock

RE ★ Dwight Freeney  
 ○ Jeff Charleston

SLB ○ Tyjuan Hagler  
 ○ Rob Morris

MLB ■ Gary Brackett  
 ○ Brandon Archer

WLB ○ Freddy Keiaho  
 ○ Tyjuan Hagler

LCB ■ Marlin Jackson  
 ○ Tim Jennings

SS ★ Bob Sanders  
 ○ Brannon Condren

FS ■ Antoine Bethea  
 ○ Matt Giordano

RCB ■ Kelvin Hayden  
 ○ T.J. Rushing

### SPECIALISTS

K ■ Adam Vinatieri

P ○ Hunter Smith

KR ○ T.J. Rushing

PR ○ T.J. Rushing

LS ■ Justin Snow


**PROJECTED DEPTH CHART**

- ★ Elite
- Solid
- Adequate
- Fringe

**OFFENSE**

QB	David Garrard Quinn Gray
FB	Greg Jones Montell Owens
RB	Fred Taylor Maurice Jones-Drew
WR	Dennis Northcutt John Broussard
WR	Reggie Williams Mike Walker
TE	Marcades Lewis George Wrightster
LT	Khalid Barnes Richard Collier
LG	Vince Manuwai Uche Nwaneri
C	Brad Meester Dennis Norman
RG	Chris Naeole Dennis Norman
RT	Tony Pashos Richard Collier

**DEFENSE**

LE	Paul Spicer Brent Hawkins
DT	Marcus Stroud Rob Meier
DT	John Henderson Derek Landri
RE	Bobby McCray Jeremy Mincey
OLB	Daryl Smith Brian Luuh
MLB	Mike Peterson Justin Durant
OLB	Clint Ingram Brian Luuh
LCB	Rashean Mathis Terry Cousin
SS	Gerald Sensabaugh Chad Nkang
FS	Reggie Nelson Jamal Fudge
RCB	Brian Williams Scott Starks

**SPECIALISTS**

K	Josh Scobee
P	Adam Podlesh
KR	Maurice Jones-Drew
PR	Dennis Northcutt
LS	Joe Zelenka

**5-YEAR RECORD B+**

Jaguars vice president of player personnel James Harris has taken unfair criticism for the performances of former first-round receivers Matt Jones ('05) and Reggie Williams ('04). But on the whole, the club has drafted well and built a roster full of depth. While CB Rashean Mathis (second round, 2003) and FB Greg Jones (second round, 2004) are the only players over this span to garner Pro Bowl consideration, the contributions of the club's draft picks as a whole shouldn't be ignored, as they have yielded the Jaguars 11 starters.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	9	10	8	6	11
<b>STUDS</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	2	4	0	2	3
<b>BACKUPS</b>	2	2	6	3	5
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	2	2	2	1	1
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	3	2	0	0	2
<b>YEARLY GRADE</b>	A-	B	B	B+	A-

**FIRST-ROUND PICK 26th****NEEDS**

**1. DEFENSIVE END** ▶ The inability to consistently pressure the quarterback has been a problem the last couple of years, so look for Jacksonville to address the situation in the draft. Holding the 26th overall selection, the Jaguars would likely still have a shot at landing Clemson's Phillip Merling, Ohio State's Vernon Gholston or Auburn's Quentin Groves.

**2. WIDE RECEIVER** ▶ The Jaguars finally have the system and quarterback in place to field the explosive offense coach Jack Del Rio has coveted. What's holding the unit back, though, is its lack of a true No. 1 receiver. The club likely won't find one in this year's draft, but can target prospects who fit into offensive coordinator Dirk Koetter's system. The Jags will take a hard look at receivers who can stretch the field such as Kansas State's Jordy Nelson, Louisville's Harry Douglas, Florida's Andre Caldwell and Kentucky's Steve Johnson.

**3. SAFETY** ▶ Cover 2 defenses heavily rely on safeties who can make up a lot of ground in a hurry. The Jaguars didn't have that last season with veteran Sammy Knight, who filled in for starter Gerald Sensabaugh after he suffered a season-ending shoulder injury. While Sensabaugh is expected back in 2008, the Jags need to acquire a strong safety for depth purposes. Someone with the skill set of Texas' Marcus Griffin or Arkansas State's Tyrell Johnson should be available in the later rounds.

**4. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** ▶ There's a possibility the club could be preparing for life without Marcus Stroud, who has been plagued by injuries the past two seasons. The Jags continue to hold out hope for a full, healthy season by Stroud, but plan to be aggressive in the draft to provide additional players at this position. Jacksonville will likely target defensive tackles in the later rounds of the draft unless a promising prospect slips down the board.

**5. GUARD** ▶ Depth seems somewhat of an issue at right guard with Chris Naeole returning from a ruptured quadriceps tendon and the likely departure of Maurice Williams, who is a free agent. Koetter, who previously coached at Arizona State, is familiar with Sun Devils guard Brandon Rodd (who can also play tackle), which could lead the Jags in that direction late in the draft.

**6. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** ▶ Set to enter his third season, Richard Collier is the club's No. 1 backup at tackle, but appears to still be in the developmental stages. The Jaguars need to add some backups here, and will likely wait until the sixth or seventh round to address this position.

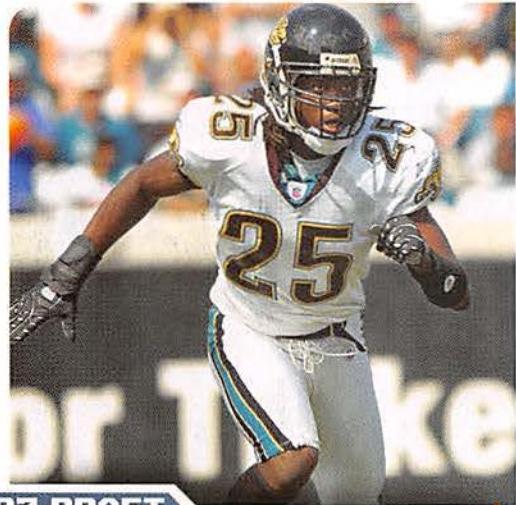
**OUTLOOK**

Because the pass rush is a major issue, the Jaguars could target a defensive end with their first-round pick. However, the club traditionally employs a take-the-best-player-available approach. So with the 26th selection, a

defensive end may be out of the picture for the Jags, who also need help at receiver and safety. It's somewhat of a tossup as to whom Jacksonville will select in the first round because of the team's vast needs and low draft choice.

Because the Jags have concentrated so much on offense in recent drafts, they've experienced a slide defensively. The club will address depth issues at safety and defensive tackle while searching for a wideout who is capable of becoming a No. 1 receiver. The Jaguars appear to be a few players away from joining the NFL's elite, making this year's draft that much more important in adding to the foundation the club has already built.

—Michael C. Wright, Florida Times-Union

**2007 DRAFT**

- REGGIE NELSON / S** (16 games/15 started) He immediately became a starter, and could be moved to cornerback in 2008. ► A-
- Justin Durant / OLB** (13/8) Started in eight games last year and adds athleticism to the linebacking corps. ► A-
- Mike Walker / WR (O/0)** Showed tremendous ability in training camp, but spent rookie year on injured reserve due to a knee injury. ► INC
- Adam Podlesh / P** (16/0) Was up and down at times but finished the season strong. ► B+
- Brian Smith / DE (O/0)** Spent last season on injured reserve, but still could wind up being a steal. ► INC
- Uche Nwaneri / G (9/1)** Is still somewhat raw, but the coaching staff is gaining confidence in his abilities. ► B-
- Josh Gattis / S (4/0)** Was released following training camp and later signed to the Bears' practice squad. ► D
- Derek Landri / DT (13/0)** Although undersized, he became an immediate contributor in the rotation. ► B+
- John Broussard / WR (8/0)** Displays tremendous deep speed and consistent hands, but needs to bulk up. ► B+
- Chad Nkang / S (16/0)** Led the team in special teams tackles as a rookie, but isn't ready yet to contribute much on defense. ► B+
- Andrew Carnahan / OT (0/0)** Spent his rookie season on the practice squad, but could develop into a serviceable backup. ► C



2007 RECORD: 4-12  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/chiefs

KANSAS CITY

# CHIEFS



## 5-YEAR RECORD

C

The 2003 and '04 drafts have produced just one quality player each for the Chiefs in RB Larry Johnson and DE Jared Allen, respectively. However, Kansas City looks to have improved over the past two years and that's no coincidence, as these were the first two drafts under the watch of coach Herm Edwards and vice president of player personnel Bill Kuharich. Four players from the 2006 and '07 drafts started 15 games or more for the Chiefs last season, while five others saw significant time as backups.

## NEEDS

**1. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** > Ideally, the Chiefs would like to come away with a left tackle who could not only start immediately, but also solve the problem for years to come. Damion McIntosh did an adequate job at the position for Kansas City in 2007, but he is 31 and better suited to playing right tackle at this point in his career. Michigan's Jake Long, a premier run-blocker, or Boise State's Ryan Clady would be a good choice.

**2. CORNERBACK** > Kansas City must replace Ty Law, who hit a wall last season and is unlikely to return. The Chiefs would prefer to obtain a second cornerback to take the place of Patrick Surtain, who slowed noticeably last season. With no young players on the roster capable of stepping in, they'll look to either the draft or free agency here. Someone such as Auburn's Patrick Lee would fit nicely in Kansas City's cover-2 scheme.

**3. GUARD** > The Chiefs would need two new starters at guard if they move Brian Waters to center. Last year's other starting guard, John Welbourn, struggled and his time with the team appears finished. Clemson's Chris McDuffie might be a good selection.

**4. WIDE RECEIVER** > Dwayne Bowe, last year's first-round pick, had a sensational rookie season. Now the Chiefs must pair him with someone. The team no longer appears interested in last season's other starter, 35-year-old Eddie Kennison, or top reserve Samie Parker, who has been far too inconsistent. A faster receiver such as Florida's Andre Caldwell would make a lot of sense.

**5. RETURN MAN** > Life without Dante Hall proved difficult for the Chiefs last season. They often started drives deep in their own territory because of poor punt or kickoff returns. Field position is paramount for a Herm Edwards team, so Kansas City must find a competent return specialist.

**6. QUARTERBACK** > The Chiefs say they are committed to Brodie Croyle next season, but Boston College's Matt Ryan could change their minds. It's been many years since this team was in position to draft a potential franchise quarterback, so Kansas City just might find Ryan too tempting to pass up if he's available. Even if the Chiefs pass on a quarterback in the first

round, they make take someone like Delaware's Joe Flacco later in the draft.

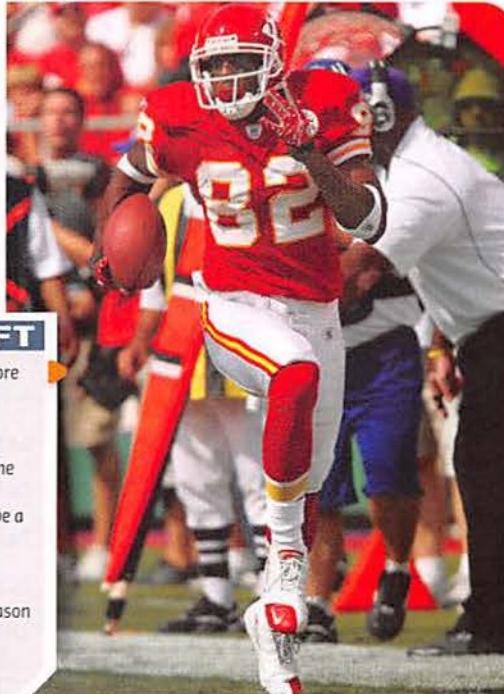
**7. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** > Donnie Edwards will turn 35 in April and, though he probably has another strong season in him, the Chiefs need to plan for his eventual departure. Kansas City has no obvious heir apparent, so a good selection here would be Miami's Tavares Gooden, who can run and cover and would provide a nice complement to Derrick Johnson.

## OUTLOOK

Repairing a decrepit offensive line will be the primary focus. Kansas City needs three new starters. While a free agent will likely be signed to fill at least one of those holes, it's not out of the question that the team will open the season with a couple of rookies starting on its line. With 10 draft picks this year, the Chiefs could spend as many as four on offensive linemen. Kansas City also needs a starting wide receiver to pair with Dwayne Bowe.

Don't discount the possibility that Kansas City will draft a quarterback, as the Chiefs could find Boston College's Matt Ryan tempting in the first round. On defense, Kansas City must acquire at least one cornerback, preferably two. Look for a productive corner to be selected in the middle rounds.

—Adam Teicher, Kansas City Star



## 2007 DRAFT

- DWAYNE BOWE / WR** (16 games/15 started) Needs to be more consistent, but has the makings of a No. 1 receiver. ► A-
- Turk McBride / DE** (16/1) Made progress after a slow start, but greater strides are needed. ► C-
- Tank Tyler / DT** (15/1) Wasn't as disruptive as the Chiefs hoped he would be. ► C-
- Colby Smith / RB** (16/6) Showed elusiveness and the ability to be a solid backup. ► B+
- Justin Medlock / K** (1/0) Was so bad the Chiefs (who passed on Mason Crosby) cut him after one game. ► F
- Herb Taylor / G** (2/0) A good athlete who held his own in late-season playing time. ► C+
- Michael Allan / TE** (0/0) Has some pass-catching ability, but is unlikely to ever develop into a regular starter. ► C

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

QB	○ Brodie Croyle
○ Damon Huard	
FB	● Boomer Grigsby
● Gilbert Harris	
RB	★ Larry Johnson
○ Kolby Smith	
WR	○ Jeff Webb
● Bobby Sippio	
WR	■ Dwayne Bowe
● Bobby Sippio	
TE	★ Tony Gonzalez
● Michael Allan	
LT	○ Damion McIntosh
● Will Suiter	
LG	○ Herb Taylor
● Tre Stallings	
C	■ Brian Waters
● Rudy Niswanger	
RG	○ Tre Stallings
● Herb Taylor	
RT	○ Will Suiter
● Adrian Jones	

### DEFENSE

LE	■ Tamba Hali
○ Jimmy Wilkerson	
DT	■ Ron Edwards
○ James Reed	
DT	■ Alfonso Boone
○ Tank Tyler	
RE	★ Jared Allen
○ Turk McBride	
OLB	■ Derrick Johnson
● Johnny Baldwin	
MLB	○ Napoleon Harris
● Nate Harris	
OLB	■ Donnie Edwards
○ Keyaron Fox	
LCB	○ Benny Sapp
● Dimitri Patterson	
SS	○ Bernard Pollard
○ Jon McGraw	
FS	■ Jarrad Page
○ Jon McGraw	
RCB	○ Patrick Surtain
○ Tyron Brackenridge	

### SPECIALISTS

K	○ John Carney
P	■ Dustin Colquitt
KR	○ Benny Sapp
PR	● Benny Sapp
LS	○ J.P. Darche

## DOLPHINS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

## OFFENSE

	Elite	Solid	Adequate	Fringe
QB	○ John Beck			
○ Cleo Lemon				
FB	● Reagan Mauia			
RB	■ Ronnie Brown			
○ Jesse Chatman				
WR	○ Ted Ginn Jr.			
WR	● Greg Camarillo			
○ Derek Hagan				
TE	● David Martin			
○ Justin Peelle				
LT	■ Vernon Carey			
○ Cory Lekkerkerker				
LG	● Chris Liwinski			
○ Gene Mruczkowski				
C	■ Samson Satele			
○ Rex Hadnot				
RG	○ Rex Hadnot			
○ Gene Mruczkowski				
RT	● Cory Lekkerkerker			

## DEFENSE

	Elite	Solid	Adequate	Fringe
LE	○ Matt Roth			
○ Rodrique Wright				
NT	● Paul Soliai			
DT	■ Vonnie Holliday			
○ Rodrique Wright				
RE	★ Jason Taylor			
○ Quentin Moses				
OLB	■ Channing Crowder			
○ Derrick Pope				
MLB	● Edmond Miles			
■ Channing Crowder				
OLB	■ Joey Porter			
○ Donnie Spragin				
OLB	○ Will Allen			
○ Courtney Bryan				
SS	○ Renaldo Hill			
○ Courtney Bryan				
FS	■ Yeremiah Bell			
○ Jason Allen				
RCB	● Michael Lehan			
○ Travis Daniels				

## SPECIALISTS

	Elite	Solid	Adequate	Fringe
K	■ Jay Feely			
○ Brandon Fields				
KR	■ Ted Ginn Jr.			
PR	■ Ted Ginn Jr.			
LS	○ John Denney			

## 5-YEAR RECORD □

Even though the Dolphins raised more than a few eyebrows by drafting Ted Ginn Jr. instead of QB Brady Quinn with the No. 9 pick last year, the former Ohio State wideout could still turn out to be a top-flight player. This organization suffered a disappointing draft in 2006, labeled by the first-round selection of S Jason Allen. So aside from finally getting some return from RB **Ronnie Brown** (the No. 2 overall pick in 2005) and a few other picks along the way, Miami is still battling a drafting curse that digs farther back than just five years.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	9	6	6	6	10
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	0	3	3	2	3
BACKUPS	1	0	2	1	7
OTHER TEAMS	2	0	1	2	0
OUT OF NFL	6	3	0	1	0
YEARLY GRADE	F	D	B-	D	B

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 1st

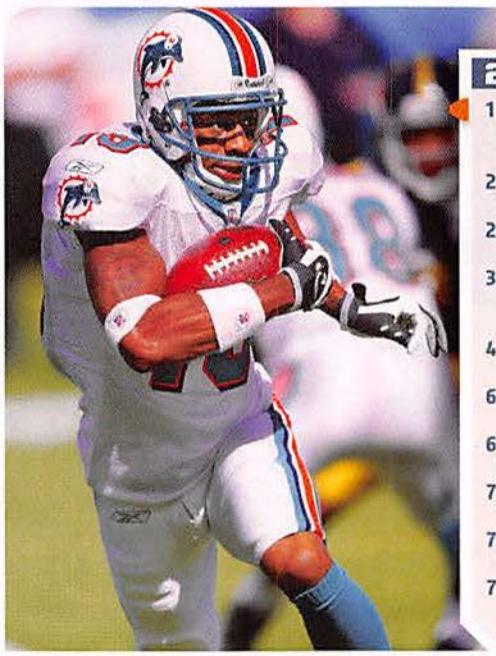
## NEEDS

**1. LEFT TACKLE** » For nearly as long as the Dolphins have been searching for a franchise quarterback, their quest to find a franchise left tackle has been equally empty—even if the failed task hasn't been as equally scrutinized. However, with Bill Parcells now calling the shots, don't expect that to last long. Parcells, the team's new executive vice president of football operations, has a history of placing a high priority on bulky linemen. That's why Miami will take a long look at Michigan's Jake Long. If the team chooses a different route at No. 1, a later name to consider is Pittsburgh's Jeff Otah.

**2. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** » Miami's desire to land an effective, young playmaker on defense combined with the rising stock of LSU's Glenn Dorsey could make this pick a foregone conclusion weeks before the draft even arrives. The Dolphins are in desperate need of someone to be more disruptive on defense, and that will become even more necessary if the team decides to cut ties with defensive end Jason Taylor.

**3. GUARD** » When free agency hits, guard Rex Hadnot's moderately successful season is likely to garner far bigger bids than the Dolphins are willing to match. If indeed Miami lets Hadnot find a new team, a replacement will be needed through the draft. A prospect such as UCLA's Shannon Tevaga could be a good target with a later pick.

**4. CORNERBACK** » Even if the Dolphins plan to spend big money on a much-needed shutdown cornerback like



New England's Asante Samuel during free agency, they'll also need to devote some attention to the position in the draft as well. Expect them to address this area in the second or third rounds, perhaps looking at someone like USC's Terrell Thomas.

**5. INSIDE LINEBACKER** » This need is now heightened with the offseason release of Zach Thomas, who missed most of last year because of a concussion and migraines. Edmond Miles is not the answer, so the Dolphins could take a close look at somebody like Florida State's Geno Hayes.

**6. TIGHT END** » When the Dolphins waived Randy McMichael last offseason, it came as a surprise to many in Miami since his production as a pass catcher was better than any other tight end in team history. His replacement, David Martin, was generally disappointing, which could lead to some emphasis on this position. One option is Notre Dame's John Carlson, who might be the best pass-catching tight end in this year's draft.

## OUTLOOK

Aside from the pesky 1-15 record and talent-thin roster, it isn't hard to see why Bill Parcells returned to football for this. Great weather, low expectations, a high-paying owner—and one more item: loads of draft picks. The Dolphins have the No. 1 overall pick this year and three more selections in the next two rounds.

Even though LSU defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey could be a very attractive top pick, the Dolphins are also strong candidates for a trade. The team needs playmakers on offense and disruptive, tough players on defense. Miami could decide to pile up as many rookies as possible, hoping that many turn into eventual starters.

—Jeff Darlington, Miami Herald

## 2007 DRAFT

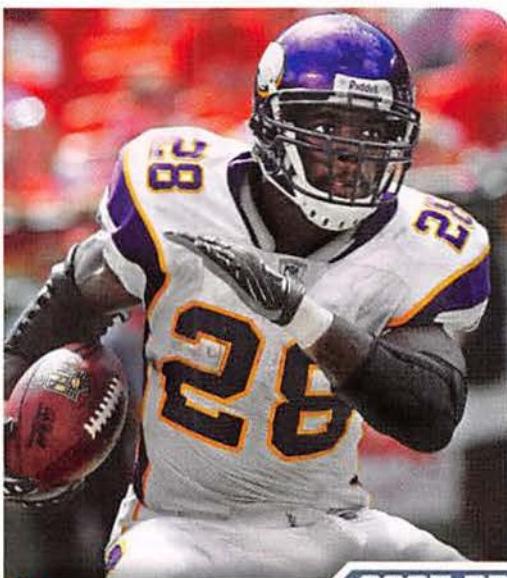
1. **TED GINN JR. / WR** (16 games/9 started) Has yet to prove he was worth the ninth overall pick, but his obvious speed will eventually make him a serious weapon. ► B
- 2a. **John Beck / QB** (5/4) It would be unfair to judge his first four starts, considering he had no legitimate help around him. ► C
- 2b. **Samson Satele / C** (16/15) Has the smarts to be a franchise center for this team if the rest of the offensive line is also bolstered. ► B
3. **Lorenzo Booker / RB** (7/1) Perhaps one of the bigger mysteries of a miserable season was why this effective runner and pass-catcher wasn't played sooner. ► B
4. **Paul Soliai / DT** (8/0) Didn't get rave reviews from coaches who wanted to see a more productive work ethic out of him late in the year. ► D
- 5a. **Reagan Mauia / FB** (16/9) A mean, tough fullback who's going to get along nicely with a mean, tough evaluator in Bill Parcells. ► C
- 5b. **Drew Mormino / C** (0/0) Gained some good experience, but he'll have to get stronger in the offseason to have a shot as a starter. ► C
- 6a. **Kelvin Smith / LB** (4/0) With sparks of potential despite no expectations, he has the size and athleticism to get another look this season. ► C
- 6b. **Brandon Fields / P** (16/0) A worthwhile draft pick since he was used very often in a punt-filled season. ► B-
- 7c. **Abraham Wright / LB** (0/0) Despite some serious preseason hype, he produced about as much as should be expected from a seventh-round pick. ► C



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	7	8	7	6	8
STUDS	1	0	0	0	1
STARTERS	1	1	0	5	1
BACKUPS	0	4	3	0	4
OTHER TEAMS	1	1	1	1	1
OUT OF NFL	4	2	3	0	1
YEARLY GRADE >	A	C	F	B	B

## NEEDS

- 1. WIDE RECEIVER** » The team needs to build around 2007 newcomers Bobby Wade and Sidney Rice. Most importantly, the Vikings could use a big-play receiver who can draw double teams. Picking 17th overall, Minnesota has the opportunity to look at the very best receivers the draft has to offer. That list includes LSU's Early Doucet and Oklahoma State's Adarius Bowman.
- 2. SAFETY** » With Darren Sharper entering the final year of his contract and Dwight Smith dealing with off-field issues, the team needs to begin rebuilding this position. There isn't much help in reserve as veteran backups Tank Williams and Mike Doss are both pending free agents. One intriguing possibility is Notre Dame's Tom Zbikowski, who could also help in the return game.



## 2007 DRAFT

- ADRIAN PETERSON / RB** (14 games/9 started) A record-breaking season made him the NFL's Offensive Rookie of the Year. ► A
- Sidney Rice / WR** (13/4) Proved to be the team's best red-zone threat and has a bright future. ► B+
- Marcus McCauley / CB** (16/9) Played extensively because of injuries to others, but opponents picked on him. ► C
- Brian Robison / DE** (16/5) A strong start was slowed by injuries and fatigue, as he now projects as a part-time player. ► C
- Aundrae Allison / WR** (11/0) Had some long kickoff returns and possesses sneaky speed as a receiver. ► B
- Rufus Alexander / LB** (0/0) Spent the season on injured reserve because of a knee injury. ► INC
- Tyler Thigpen / QB** (1/0) Has upside and, while the Vikings wanted him for the practice squad, he was a waiver pickup by Kansas City. ► B
- Chandler Williams / WR** (0/0) Made it to the final cut, but wasn't good enough to join a thin group of receivers. ► C

## 5-YEAR RECORD C

This time period has spanned three different front-office structures, resulting in a fractured and inconsistent draft performance. There have been some high points—DT Kevin Williams and MLB E.J. Henderson were the team's top two choices in 2003—and many low ones. By far, the worst year was 2005. It's possible that none of the players taken in that draft will be on the roster in 2008. The most encouraging sign is a headliner draft last year that included four players who finished the season as starters: RB Adrian Peterson, WR Sidney Rice, CB Marcus McCauley and DE Brian Robison.

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 17th

- 3. DEFENSIVE END** » This is a perennial need for most every team in the NFL. The Vikings have good run-stoppers but, like everyone else, they could use a pass rusher from the outside. None of Minnesota's defensive ends finished with more than five sacks last year. Darrion Scott is expected to depart via free agency, while Erasmus James is recovering from the third ACL surgery on his left knee. One possibility would be to seek an undersized end who could be used in different defensive situations, like Purdue's Cliff Avril.
- 4. RIGHT TACKLE** » The team's starting offensive line is largely set, but its depth is thin because one of the starters, Ryan Cook, is also the backup center. He might one day replace Matt Birk. If that happens to take place in 2008, the Vikings don't have a potential replacement at right tackle. In short, Minnesota needs to beef up its depth. One developmental prospect is Division II Newberry's Heath Benedict.
- 5. QUARTERBACK** » Coach Brad Childress has expressed an interest in drafting a quarterback every year, either to use as trade bait or accentuate depth. It seems that Tarvaris Jackson could be the long-term starter, but Kelly Holcomb is nearing the end of his career and Brooks Bollinger doesn't seem to be the answer. Childress has kept his intentions close to the vest, but likes mobile quarterbacks and is in position to take a chance in the later rounds on Oregon's Dennis Dixon, who is recovering from knee surgery and might not be ready in 2008.
- 6. INSIDE LINEBACKER** » Starter E.J. Henderson is set here in the middle. However, longtime backup Dontarrious Thomas isn't expected back, so the Vikings will need depth. This would likely be a second-day pick.

## OUTLOOK

The irony of the Vikings' 2008 draft is that most would suggest the quarterback position is the biggest question mark on their roster. But it seems highly unlikely that the team will focus on drafting a signal-caller in the early rounds because it would certainly be at least a year before he could make an impact. As a result, Minnesota will likely focus on adding playmakers to give incumbent Tarvaris Jackson additional weapons in the passing game.

As he proved last season by drafting Adrian Peterson even though Chester Taylor was coming off a 1,200-yard season, vice president of player personnel Rick Spielman will take the best playmaker available no matter the position. Ideally, that player will be a wide receiver, where the team has a huge need for a deep threat. The Vikings drafted three wideouts in 2007, and it wouldn't be surprising if they took multiple receivers again in '08 in hopes of stretching opposing defenses and keeping opponents away from Peterson. The team also hopes to upgrade depth on the offensive line and in the secondary.

—Kevin Seifert, Minnesota Star-Tribune

MINNESOTA

# VIKINGS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
 ■ Solid  
 ○ Adequate  
 □ Fringe

### OFFENSE

- |    |                     |
|----|---------------------|
| QB | ★ Tarvaris Jackson  |
|    | ■ Brooks Bollinger  |
| FB | ■ Tony Richardson   |
|    | ○ Jeff Dugan        |
| RB | ★ Adrian Peterson   |
|    | ■ Chester Taylor    |
| WR | ○ Bobby Wade        |
|    | ○ Martin Nance      |
| WR | ■ Sidney Rice       |
|    | ○ Aundrae Allison   |
| TE | ○ Visanthe Shiancoe |
|    | ○ Jim Kleinsasser   |
| LT | ★ Bryant McKinnie   |
|    | ○ Artis Hicks       |
| LG | ★ Steve Hutchinson  |
|    | ○ Dan Mozes         |
| C  | ★ Matt Birk         |
|    | ○ Ryan Cook         |
| RG | ○ Anthony Herrera   |
|    | ○ Artis Hicks       |
| RT | ○ Ryan Cook         |
|    | ○ Marcus Johnson    |

### DEFENSE

- |     |                    |
|-----|--------------------|
| LE  | ■ Kenechi Udeze    |
|     | ○ Jayme Mitchell   |
| DT  | ★ Kevin Williams   |
|     | ○ Fred Evans       |
| DT  | ★ Pat Williams     |
|     | ○ Fred Evans       |
| RE  | ○ Ray Edwards      |
|     | ○ Brian Robison    |
| SLB | ■ Ben Leber        |
|     | ○ Rufus Alexander  |
| MLB | ■ E.J. Henderson   |
|     | ○ Heath Farwell    |
| WLB | ○ Chad Greenway    |
|     | ○ Heath Farwell    |
| LCB | ★ Antoine Winfield |
|     | ○ Charles Gordon   |
| SS  | ■ Dwight Smith     |
|     | ○ Eric Frampton    |
| FS  | ■ Darren Sharper   |
|     | ○ Eric Frampton    |
| RCB | ○ Cedric Griffin   |
|     | ○ Marcus McCauley  |

### SPECIALISTS

- |    |                   |
|----|-------------------|
| K  | ■ Ryan Longwell   |
| P  | ■ Chris Kluwe     |
| KR | ○ Aundrae Allison |
| PR | ○ Bobby Wade      |
| LS | ★ Cullen Loeffler |

# PATRIOTS



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

QB	★ Tom Brady
	● Matt Cassel
FB	○ Heath Evans
	● Kyle Eckel
RB	■ Laurence Maroney
	■ Kevin Faulk
WR	★ Randy Moss
	○ Jabar Gaffney
WR	★ Wes Welker
	● Kelley Washington
TE	■ Benjamin Watson
	○ Kyle Brady
LT	■ Matt Light
	● Wesley Britt
LG	★ Logan Mankins
	○ Russ Hochstein
C	■ Dan Koppen
	○ Russ Hochstein
RG	○ Stephen Neal
	● Billy Yates
RT	○ Nick Kaczur
	● Ryan O'Callaghan

### DEFENSE

LE	★ Ty Warren
	● Le Kevin Smith
NT	★ Vince Wilfork
	● Rashad Moore
RE	■ Richard Seymour
	○ Jarvis Green
OLB	★ Mike Vrabel
	● Pierre Woods
ILB	■ Tedy Bruschi
	● Eric Alexander
ILB	■ Junior Seau
	● Larry Izzo
OLB	■ Adalius Thomas
	● Pierre Woods
LCB	○ Randall Gay
	○ Brandon Meriweather
SS	■ Rodney Harrison
	● Willie Andrews
FS	○ James Sanders
	● Mel Mitchell
RCB	■ Ellis Hobbs
	● Chad Scott

### SPECIALISTS

K	■ Stephen Gostkowski
P	○ Chris Hanson
KR	■ Ellis Hobbs
PR	■ Wes Welker
LS	■ Loni Paxton

## 5-YEAR RECORD B+

The 2007 grade would be an F except for the fact the Patriots turned three of their picks into WRs Randy Moss and Wes Welker and gained the No. 7 pick this year. That's enough of a haul to keep the draft from being a total wash. That being said, New England hasn't selected a true impact player since grabbing LG Logan Mankins with its 2005 first-round pick. Because the Patriots used free agency to add some top-end talent in 2007, look for them to focus on acquiring and developing young players this year.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	10	8	7	10	9
STUDS	1	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	2	2	4	1	0
BACKUPS	1	0	1	6	3
OTHER TEAMS	4	0	0	2	5
OUT OF NFL	2	6	2	1	1
YEARLY GRADE >	A	B	A-	C+	B

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 7th

### NEEDS

**1. INSIDE LINEBACKER** » The Patriots are aging inside, where incumbents Tedy Bruschi and Junior Seau will be 35 and 39, respectively, by the start of the 2008 season. The two stayed injury-free and played fairly well last year, but they project to be liabilities in pass coverage. New England needs to get younger at this position.

**2. CORNERBACK** » Assuming that Asante Samuel departs in free agency, New England will have a glaring hole at left cornerback. Rookie corners have stepped in and excelled across the league, so this may be a direction the Pats go if they stick with the No. 7 overall pick. Two names to watch are Kansas' Aqib Talib and South Florida's Mike Jenkins.

**3. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** » Overall, the Patriots have a serious need for linebackers. On the outside, there isn't much depth behind Mike Vrabel and Adalius Thomas. New England could use a young player to groom as a future replacement and add competition.

**4. TACKLE** » Two-time Pro Bowler Matt Light had a solid season, but struggled with speed rushers, particularly in the Super Bowl. A little competition couldn't hurt at one of the most important positions on the field. The best name on the board is Michigan's Jake Long, but at 6-6 and 320 pounds, he's a little bigger than the typical Pats lineman. Another potential pick is Boise State's Ryan Clady (6-5, 320).

**5. WIDE RECEIVER** » With Randy Moss and Jabar Gaffney now free agents and Donte' Stallworth and Kelley Washington holding roster bonuses (of \$8 million and \$4 million, respectively) that may not be picked up, the Patriots could be looking for a speedster to complement slot receiver Wes Welker. This is more likely a need that will be addressed in the second or third round.

**6. TIGHT END** » Starter Benjamin Watson is set in stone and veteran Kyle Brady had an excellent 2007 season, but he'll be 36 next year. One mid-round sleeper could be Tennessee's Brad Cottam, who's gigantic (6-8, 270) and could be undervalued after missing most of his senior year with a wrist injury.

**7. RUNNING BACK** » Kevin Faulk isn't getting any younger, and, at some point, the Patriots are going to have to find another scatback-type to perform his invaluable duties as a receiver and blocker. Now would be a good time to develop such a player, who could also give starter Laurence Maroney extra plays off.

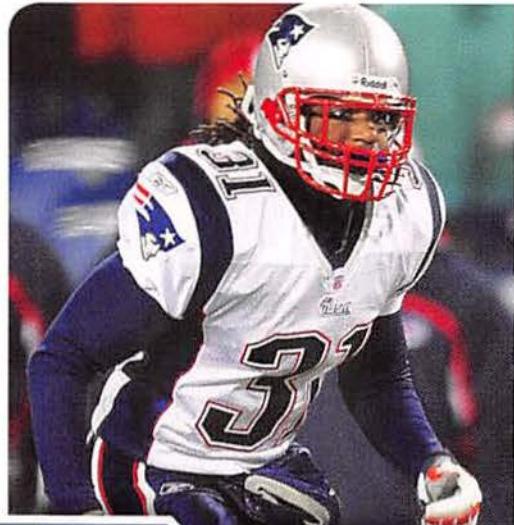
### OUTLOOK

The Patriots rarely sit still on draft day, particularly when it comes to their first-round pick, which the team has traded three times since Bill Belichick started calling the shots in 2000. New England has always operated from a value standpoint, believing low first-round

selections provide better bang for the buck than high ones that come with the kind of guaranteed money usually reserved for a proven veteran.

New England lost its own first-round pick due to last season's videotaping scandal, but it does have San Francisco's selection thanks to a draft-day deal last year that helped bring Randy Moss to the roster. At one point it looked as if the Patriots might end up with the second overall pick, but the 49ers won two out of their last three games, leaving the Pats at No. 7 overall. The biggest team need is at linebacker, but New England hasn't selected one on the first day of the draft since Belichick took over. The Patriots need an infusion of speed on defense, where only the front three is set. Every other position could use an upgrade or, at the very least, quality backups.

—John Tomase, Boston Herald



## 2007 DRAFT

1. Brandon Meriweather / S (16 games/0 started) Progressed slowly in the secondary, but his speed gives him potential. ► C
4. Kareem Brown / DT (1/0) Was cut midseason so Troy Brown could have a roster spot, then later claimed off waivers by the Jets. ► D
5. Clint Oldenburg / OT (2/0) Cut in training camp and ended his season on the Jets' practice squad. ► D
- 6a. Justin Rogers / LB (16/0) Released in training camp and spent the year as a member of Dallas' special teams. ► C-
- 6b. Mike Richardson / CB (0/0) A bum arm caused him to spend the season on injured reserve. ► INC
- 6c. Justice Hairston / RB (0/0) Suffered a preseason hamstring injury and was later signed to Indianapolis' practice squad. ► D
- 6d. Corey Hilliard / OT (3/0) Cut during training camp and ended up making spot appearances for the Colts. ► D
- 7a. OscarLua / LB (0/0) Tore his MCL in the final preseason game and spent the season on injured reserve. ► INC
- 7a. Mike Elgin / G (0/0) Cut during training camp and signed to the Colts' practice squad. ► D

# SAINTS

## 5-YEAR RECORD B+

Aside from 2007, the Saints' overall track record in recent years has been outstanding. Defensive end Will Smith was an absolute steal with the 18th overall pick in 2004. New Orleans' first-round selection in '05, OT Jammal Brown, was named All-Pro a year later. And the 2006 draft was practically a perfect storm. First, the Saints made the easy choice of RB Reggie Bush with the No. 2 overall pick, then discovered G Jahri Evans in the fourth round and WR Marques Colston late in the seventh round.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	7	6	7	8	7
STUDS	0	0	1	0	0
STARTERS	1	3	1	4	0
BACKUPS	0	0	1	1	5
OTHER TEAMS	1	1	1	2	2
OUT OF NFL	5	3	3	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	D+	A	B	A	D+

## NEEDS

**1. CORNERBACK** New Orleans tried to upgrade its talent here in 2007, but neither free agent Jason David nor rookie Usama Young made an impact last season. Now, the team has to worry about the return of its one reliable cornerback, Mike McKenzie, who suffered a torn ACL in December. The Saints need to find an athletic corner with good instincts in man coverage. It's hard to say if any cornerbacks will be worthy of the 10th overall pick in the draft, but New Orleans will no doubt take a close look at players such as South Florida's Mike Jenkins, Kansas' Aqib Talib, Boston College's DeJuan Tribble and Arizona's Antoine Cason.

**2. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** The Saints got burned when they traded up for defensive tackle Johnathan Sullivan in the 2003 draft. But the team will at least consider going down that road again five years later. New Orleans needs to add impact players throughout the defense, and must get younger at this position. USC's Sedrick Ellis, North Carolina's Kentwan Balmer and Texas A&M's Red Bryant are all viable options.

**3. MIDDLE LINEBACKER** Noticing a trend here? The Saints will be hard-pressed to ignore their defense in the first round of the 2008 draft after loading up the offense during past years. They need to get better at almost every position, along with getting younger, more athletic and more dynamic. New Orleans could look at Penn State's Dan Connor early. Later in the draft, the Saints could find guys such as Virginia Tech's Vince Hall or Georgia Tech's Philip Wheeler.

**4. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** The Saints are happy with both of their starters at outside linebacker, but could use an explosive young playmaker. USC's Keith Rivers and LSU's Ali Highsmith are first-round options, while Virginia Tech's Xavier Adibi is a possible second-round pick.

**5. GUARD** New Orleans needs some depth both here and at center, and will probably draft someone in the early rounds who can compete for a starting job right away. Oregon State's Roy Schuening might be worth a look in Round 2.

PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

- QB ★ Drew Brees
- QB ● Jamie Martin
- FB ■ Tony Richardson
- FB ○ Jeff Dugan
- RB ■ Deuce McAllister
- RB ■ Reggie Bush
- WR ○ David Patten
- WR ○ Lance Moore
- WR ■ Marques Colston
- WR ○ Devery Henderson
- TE ○ Eric Johnson
- TE ○ Billy Miller
- LT ■ Jammal Brown
- LT ○ Zach Strief
- LG ■ Jamar Nesbit
- LG ○ Andy Alleman
- C ■ Jeff Faine
- C ○ Jonathan Goodwin
- RG ■ Jahri Evans
- RG ○ Tim Duckworth
- RT ■ Jon Stinchcomb
- RT ○ Jermon Bushrod

### DEFENSE

- LE ■ Charles Grant
- LE ○ Rendaldo Wynn
- DT ■ Brian Young
- DT ○ Antwan Lake
- DT ■ Hollis Thomas
- DT ○ Kendrick Clancy
- RE ★ Will Smith 1
- RE ○ Josh Cooper
- SLB ■ Scott Fujita
- SLB ○ Troy Evans
- MLB ■ Mark Simoneau
- MLB ■ Brian Simmons
- WLB ■ Scott Shanle
- WLB ○ Matt McCoy
- LCB ■ Mike McKenzie
- LCB ○ Usama Young
- SS ■ Roman Harper
- SS ○ Kevin Kaesviharn
- FS ○ Josh Bullocks
- FS ○ Chris Reis
- RBC ○ Jason David
- RBC ○ Jason Craft

### SPECIALISTS

- K ■ Olindo Mare
- P ■ Steve Weatherford
- KR ■ Aaron Stecker
- PR ■ Lance Moore
- LS ■ Kevin Houser

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 10th

**6. TIGHT END** The Saints have been trying to find a good fit at this position for a couple of years now, and may decide to do it through the draft. Expect them to consider Notre Dame's John Carlson, Texas A&M's Martellus Bennett and USC's Fred Davis. Later in the draft, New Orleans might look at someone such as Purdue's Dustin Keller.

**7. QUARTERBACK** Coach Sean Payton's specialty is quarterbacks, so there's always the possibility that he'll become enamored with a young project to mold behind Drew Brees. The Saints got a close look at Hawaii's Colt Brennan when he was practicing for the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans this past January. If the team wants to wait later in the draft, it can find a familiar face in LSU's Matt Flynn.

**8. SAFETY** Depth isn't a big issue for the Saints here, with Josh Bullocks, Roman Harper and Kevin Kaesviharn all on the roster. But they won't hesitate to upgrade if a difference-maker such as Miami's Kenny Phillips is still on the board.

## OUTLOOK

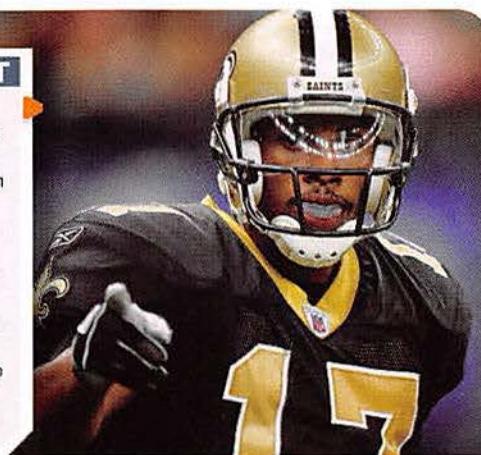
The Saints have not strayed from the "best available player" theory in recent years, pouncing on tailback Reggie Bush with the second pick overall in 2006, then selecting receiver Robert Meachem a year ago. So it wouldn't be surprising in the least if New Orleans went after a top-tier offensive tackle this year with the No. 10 pick in the draft. But if the Saints have some similar grades on a handful of guys, they really need to consider the best available defensive player.

New Orleans should also be able to find someone who can immediately compete for a starting job with its second-round selection. Defense should remain a priority throughout the draft, because the Saints need to get better and younger on that side of the ball.

—Mike Triplett, New Orleans Times-Picayune

## 2007 DRAFT

- ROBERT MEACHEM / WR** (0 games/0 started) The only first-round pick who didn't dress for a game in 2007, he was hurt early and then got stuck behind a deep position group. ► INC
- Usama Young / CB** (14/0) A small-school project, he didn't make an instant impact but still has intriguing potential. ► C+
- Andy Alleman / G** (0/0) Didn't play because the Saints' starters never got hurt, but still could grow into a decent player. ► C-
- Antonio Pittman / RB** (11/0) Didn't make the roster out of camp and ended up with the Rams. ► D
- Jermon Bushrod / OT** (1/0) Wasn't used last season, but looks like an impressive, physical athlete who could develop. ► C
- David Jones / CB** (7/0) Didn't make the Saints' roster and wound up with Cincinnati. ► D
- Marvin Mitchell / LB** (10/0) Appeared in 10 games and made a decent contribution on special teams. ► C+



## GIANTS

2007 RECORD: 10-6  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/giants

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

	★ Elite	■ Solid	○ Adequate	● Fringe
--	---------	---------	------------	----------

## OFFENSE

QB	■ Eli Manning	● Anthony Wright
FB	○ Madison Hedgecock	○ Reuben Droughns
RB	■ Brandon Jacobs	■ Ahmad Bradshaw
WR	★ Plaxico Burress	○ David Tyree
WR	■ Amani Toomer	■ Steve Smith
TE	★ Jeremy Shockey	○ Kevin Boss
LT	■ David Diehl	○ Guy Whimper
LG	■ Rich Seubert	○ Kevin Boothe
C	■ Shaun O'Hara	○ Grey Ruegamer
RG	■ Chris Snee	○ Kevin Boothe
RT	■ Kareem McKenzie	○ Adam Koets

## DEFENSE

LE	★ Michael Strahan	● Dave Tollefson
DT	○ Barry Cofield	○ Russell Davis
DT	■ Fred Robbins	○ Jay Alford
RE	★ Osi Umenyiora	■ Justin Tuck
SLB	■ Mathias Kiwanuka	○ Reggie Torbor
MLB	■ Antonio Pierce	○ Chase Blackburn
WLB	■ Kawi Mitchell	○ Gerris Wilkinson
LCB	■ Aaron Ross	○ Kevin Dockery
SS	○ James Butler	● Michael Johnson
FS	■ Gibril Wilson	○ Michael Johnson
RCB	○ Corey Webster	○ Sam Madison

## SPECIALISTS

K	○ Lawrence Tynes
P	■ Jeff Feagles
KR	■ Domenik Hixon
PR	○ R.W. McQuarters
LS	■ Zak DeOssie

## 5-YEAR RECORD B+

The blueprint of the Giants' stunning ride to victory in Super Bowl XLII can be found in the team's draft success over the past five years. It began in 2003, when they took DE Osi Umenyiora in the second round and ended up stealing LT David Diehl in the fifth. Of course, the focal point of everything New York has done in recent drafts revolves around the 2004 blockbuster deal that imported QB Eli Manning from San Diego to New York. Once viewed as a better trade for the Chargers, it's hard to make that claim now after Manning performed near flawlessly in leading the Giants to a championship.

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 31st

## NEEDS

## 1. SAFETY

As the last line of defense, the Giants' safeties were able to prevent the big passes but failed to make impact plays of their own. While there's a good chance Gibril Wilson will be re-signed, an upgrade for James Butler is needed. This defense could use a ballhawk to pose a threat for opposing offenses and strike fear in receivers with huge hits. That could lead New York to someone like N.C. State's DaJuan Morgan.

2. CORNERBACK

As injuries hit late in the season and during the playoffs, the Giants proved they had more depth here than was originally thought. There are youngsters in Aaron Ross, Corey Webster and Kevin Dockery, along with veterans Sam Madison and R.W. McQuarters. Selecting at the bottom of this year's draft, the Giants could be in range for LSU's Chevis Jackson.

3. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER

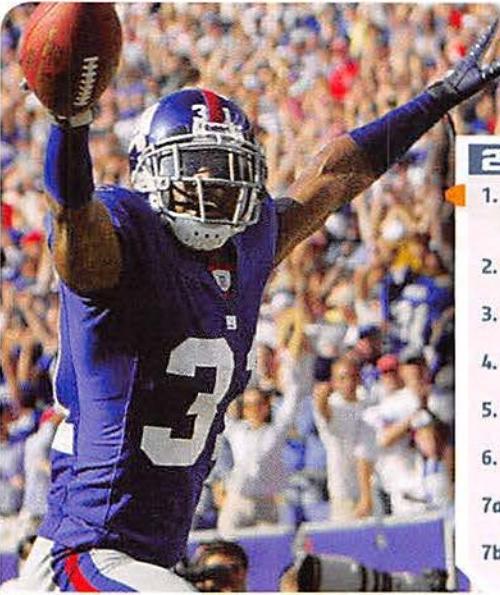
With Mathias Kiwanuka returning from a broken leg, the Giants figure to be much better at this spot. But if Kawika Mitchell leaves via free agency, an impact outside linebacker is needed. Oklahoma's Curtis Lofton or Penn State's Dan Connor would fit that profile.

4. WIDE RECEIVER

The first three slots are filled with Plaxico Burress, Amani Toomer and Steve Smith, but the offense could use a target who brings more speed to the field. While Sinorice Moss and David Tyree have shown flashes of brilliance, a quick-strike threat could be the final piece to the puzzle.

5. DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Starters Fred Robbins and Barry Cofield anchored the line in fine fashion last year, but more depth could be used to strengthen the rotation. Specifically, a



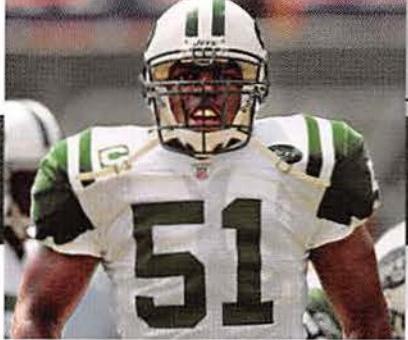
## 2007 DRAFT

1. **Aaron Ross / CB** (15 games/9 started) Was everything the team wanted—a talented cover corner who was able to compete against elite receivers. ► A
2. **Steve Smith / WR** (5/0) Salvaged an injury-filled and disappointing regular season with a great postseason. ► B
3. **Jay Alford / NT** (16/0) Did a solid job as long snapper for field goals and showed promise as a pass-rushing defensive tackle. ► B
4. **Zak DeOssie / LB** (16/0) Had an impressive rookie year serving as long snapper for punts. ► B
5. **Kevin Boss / TE** (13/2) Showed steady improvement all season and caught everything thrown his way, but needs to get better at blocking. ► A
6. **Adam Koets / OT** (0/0) This developmental project spent the season watching and learning. ► C
- 7a. **Michael Johnson / S** (16/5) Is fast, rangy and hard-hitting, but was prone to mistakes. ► C+
- 7b. **Ahmad Bradshaw / RB** (12/0) Draft-day steal came on with a fury late in the season and could be a future starter and star. ► A



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	11	7*	4	7	8
STUDS	1	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	1	3	1	2	1
BACKUPS	2	1	2	3	7
OTHER TEAMS	3	0	1	1	0
OUT OF NFL	4	3	0	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	A	B-	A	A	B+

\*Eli Manning is graded as a Giants pick, though he was drafted by the Chargers



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	7	10	8	10	4
STUDS	0	1	1	0	0
STARTERS	2	1	1	3	2
BACKUPS	0	2	2	5	2
OTHER TEAMS	2	4	3	1	0
OUT OF NFL	3	2	1	1	0
YEARLY GRADE >	C	B	B	A	A-

NEW YORK

# JETS

## 5-YEAR RECORD B

The Jets have done quite well with some of their fourth-round selections (WR Jerricho Cotchery, 2004; SS Kerry Rhodes, 2005; RB/KR Leon Washington, 2006), but only one of their first-round picks (LB Jonathan Vilma, 2005) over this span has gone to the Pro Bowl. General manager Mike Tannenbaum took over in 2006 and, while his '07 draft looks great on the surface with two potential stars in CB Darrelle Revis (first round) and ILB David Harris (second), New York had to trade up to get those players and lost three picks in the process.



### NEEDS

**1. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** Bryan Thomas slumped after a breakout 2006 season and finished with only 2.5 sacks last year, while Victor Hobson recorded just two and is now a free agent. New York desperately needs an edge rusher that opposing teams must game-plan for. Ohio State's Vernon Gholston could solve that problem, as could Auburn's Quentin Groves.

**2. WIDE RECEIVER** The Jets have lacked a speedster who can stretch defenses ever since they traded Santana Moss to Washington three years ago, and haven't had a tall, imposing target on fade routes since trading Keyshawn Johnson to Tampa Bay in 2000. Indiana's James Hardy (6-7) may be available in the second round and could solve both problems. Other tall receivers with speed who could be on the board are Arkansas' Marcus Monk and Texas' Limas Sweed.

**3. RIGHT TACKLE** Anthony Clement is entering his 11th season, and the Jets could address this position via free agency or by promoting from within. But if Michigan standout Jake Long falls in the draft, it's likely New York would take him, even though he played on the left side as a Wolverine. The Jets could move Long or shift 2006 first-round pick D'Brickashaw Ferguson to the right side. Second- or third-round possibilities include Texas' Tony Hills and Auburn's King Dunlap.



## 2007 DRAFT

- DARRELLE REVIS / CB** (16 games/16 started) He started from the opening snap of 2007 and seems destined for stardom. He's also likely the team's future punt returner. ► A-
- David Harris / LB** (16/9) Stepped in as a starter (where he had five sacks) and played like a veteran after Jonathan Vilma suffered a season-ending knee injury. ► A-
- Jacob Bender / OT** (2/0) The Jets tried to convert him to left guard in training camp, and that seems to have set back his progress. ► C-
- Chansi Stuckey / WR** (0/0) Spent the season on injured reserve after a recurrence of the foot problems that plagued him in college. However, he's got the game and savvy to be a terrific possession receiver in the future if he stays healthy. ► INC

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 6th

### PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

#### OFFENSE

QB	■ Chad Pennington ○ Kellen Clemens
FB	○ Joe Kowalewski ○ Sean Ryan
RB	■ Thomas Jones ■ Leon Washington
WR	■ Laveranues Coles ○ Brad Smith
WR	■ Jerricho Cotchery ○ Wallace Wright
TE	■ Chris Baker ○ Jason Pocisk
LT	■ D'Brickashaw Ferguson ● Clint Oldenburg
LG	○ Will Montgomery ● Robert Turner
C	■ Nick Mangold ● Wade Smith
RG	■ Brandon Moore ● Wade Smith
RT	○ Anthony Clement ● Clint Oldenburg

#### DEFENSE

LE	■ Shaun Ellis ○ C.J. Mosley
NT	■ Dewayne Robertson ■ Sione Pouha
RE	■ Kenyon Coleman ○ Mike Devito
OLB	■ David Bowens ○ Bryan Thomas
ILB	■ David Harris ○ Brad Kassell
ILB	■ Jonathan Vilma ■ Eric Barton
OLB	■ Victor Hobson ■ David Bowens
LCB	■ Darrelle Revis ○ Andre Dyson
SS	★ Kerry Rhodes ■ Eric Smith
FS	■ Abram Elam ■ Eric Smith
RCB	○ Hank Poteat ○ David Barrett

#### SPECIALISTS

K	■ Mike Nugent
P	■ Ben Graham
KR	★ Leon Washington
PR	■ Darrelle Revis
LS	■ James Dearth

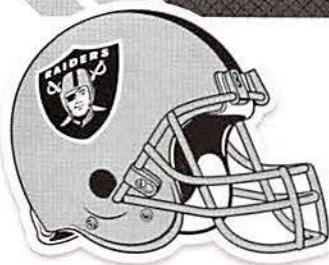
### OUTLOOK

The Jets were very aggressive on draft day last season, trading later picks in order to move up and select cornerback Darrelle Revis in the first round and linebacker David Harris in the second. The team's strategy has to be different in 2008, because there are so many immediate needs at positions on both sides of the ball. If anything, New York may be looking to trade down to perhaps net an extra pick or two, especially if the player the team is eyeing at No. 6 is off the board.

The primary goal of general manager Mike Tannenbaum and coach Eric Mangini should be to increase the number of playmakers on both sides of the ball. The duo also may have to be a bit more flexible about the type of player they select. Overvaluing character, sometimes at the expense of physical talent, has led to reaches like linebacker Anthony Schlegel, a 2006 third-round selection who played in just four games before being released.

—J.P. Pelzman, Bergen Record

## RAIDERS


**PROJECTED DEPTH CHART**

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

**OFFENSE**

**QB** ○ JaMarcus Russell  
○ Josh McCown

**FB** ■ Justin Fargas  
○ Oren O'Neal

**RB** ■ Justin Fargas  
○ Dominic Rhodes

**WR** ■ Jerry Porter  
○ Chris McFoy

**WR** ■ Ronald Curry  
○ Johnnie Lee Higgins

**TE** ■ Zach Miller  
○ John Madsen

**LT** ○ Barry Sims  
○ Mario Henderson

**LG** ■ Robert Gollery  
○ Chris Morris

**C** ■ Jeremy Newberry  
○ Jake Grove

**RG** ■ Cooper Carlisle  
○ Paul McQuistan

**RT** ○ Cornell Green  
○ Mario Henderson

**DEFENSE**

**LE** ■ Derrick Burgess  
○ Chris Clemons

**DT** ■ Tommy Kelly  
○ Tyler Brayton

**DT** ■ Gerard Warren  
○ Terrell Sands

**RE** ○ Jay Richardson  
○ Chris Clemons

**OLB** ■ Thomas Howard  
○ Ricky Brown

**MLB** ■ Kirk Morrison  
○ Robert Thomas

**DLB** ○ Robert Thomas  
○ Sam Williams

**LCB** ■ Stanford Routt  
○ Fabian Washington

**SS** ■ Michael Huff  
○ Chris Carr

**FS** ○ Hiram Eugene  
○ Stuart Schweigert

**RCB** ★ Nnamdi Asomugha  
■ Chris Carr

**SPECIALISTS**

**K** ■ Sebastian Janikowski

**P** ★ Shane Lechler

**KR** ■ Chris Carr

**PR** ○ Johnnie Lee Higgins

**LS** ■ Jon Condo

## 5-YEAR RECORD C-

Seventeen of the 44 players selected by the Raiders over the past five years started at least one game or more in 2007. However, only CB Nnamdi Asomugha, RB **Justin Fargas** and LBs Thomas Howard and Kirk Morrison are Pro Bowl-caliber at this point in their careers. Then again, perhaps the lack of impact players is not so surprising considering four different coaches (Bill Callahan, Norv Turner, Art Shell and Lane Kiffin) made the picks.

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 3rd/4th

**NEEDS**

**1. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** ► The retirement of Warren Sapp combined with a disappointing showing by Terrell Sands, a serious knee injury to Tommy Kelly and Oakland's struggles against the run make this a position that needs to be addressed immediately. LSU's Glenn Dorsey and USC's Sedrick Ellis could be available when the Raiders pick at No. 3 or No. 4 overall, which was to be determined by a coin flip with the Atlanta Falcons at the NFL combine in February.

**2. STRONG SAFETY** ► Michael Huff may switch from strong to free safety in 2008, so Oakland needs a replacement at his old position. It shouldn't be difficult for the Raiders to find a potential starter in the second round, given that teams are hesitant to use first-round picks on strong safeties unless they are as talented as Baltimore's Ed Reed and Pittsburgh's Troy Polamalu. Oklahoma's Reggie Smith is worth targeting.

**3. WIDE RECEIVER** ► Top wideout Jerry Porter has said he intends to void the remainder of his contract in the offseason. Even if he sticks around, the Raiders need a speed guy at receiver, especially with strong-armed quarterback JaMarcus Russell at the helm in 2008. Options include Oklahoma State's Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma's Malcolm Kelly, Florida's Andre Caldwell and California's DeSean Jackson.

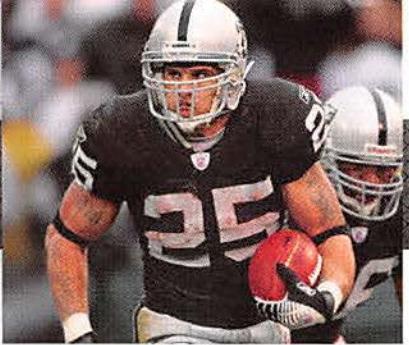
**4. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** ► Barry Sims and Cornell Green are both in the twilight of their careers. Also, Green sustained a serious foot injury in 2007, ending his season on injured reserve. Raiders coach Lane Kiffin (if he's still with the team) is intent on seeking upgrades at both positions. He already has candidates on the roster in Mario Henderson and Paul McQuistan, but wouldn't pass on the chance to add another top prospect at this position.

**5. RUNNING BACK** ► Starter Justin Fargas is expected to recover from last season's knee injury. Fargas is fresh off a breakout season in which he supplanted one-time starters LaMont Jordan and Dominic Rhodes. Oakland intends to make a strong push for Fargas, and also has Michael Bush on the roster. If Fargas bolts in free agency, don't be surprised if the Raiders look at Arkansas' Darren McFadden with their first-round pick.

**6. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** ► Sam Williams is a free agent and likely won't be re-signed, and Robert Thomas began each of the past two seasons as a backup. That increases the likelihood of the Raiders using a draft pick on a player capable of starting at the strongside position.

**OUTLOOK**

Oakland addressed offensive needs with five of its first six picks last season, and seven of 11 overall. The Raiders did so with the belief that the defense was

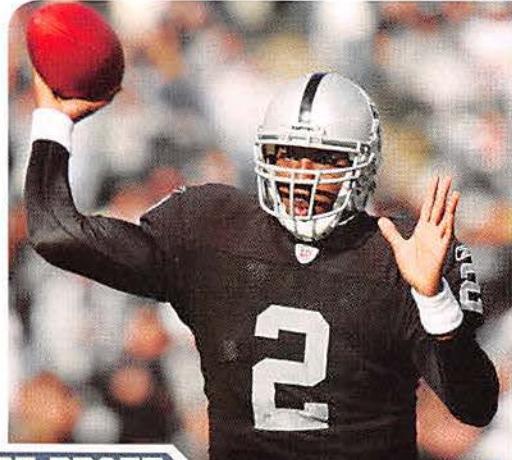


	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	10	9	7	7	11
<b>STUDS</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	1	2	2	2	2
<b>BACKUPS</b>	3	1	2	2	7
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	1	2	1	0	2
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	5	4	2	3	0
<b>YEARLY GRADE</b>	C+	F	C+	B	C-

in good shape—given all 11 starters as well as most of the top reserves returned—and knowing that the offense was the league's worst two years ago. However, both units are now in need of help. Fortunately, the team is now in prime position to land the top prospect at defensive tackle, offensive tackle or running back—three of the most pressing needs.

The Raiders received extensive playing time from only three of their 11 draft picks last season. In 2008, they need a higher percentage of players to play right away and make an immediate impact on a team that struggled in many areas. Oakland is without a third-round draft choice this year, so don't be surprised if owner Al Davis engineers at least one trade in an attempt to stockpile more selections.

—Steve Corkran, Contra Costa Times



## 2007 DRAFT

1. **JaMarcus Russell / QB** (4 games / 1 started) Started only one game and didn't get much of a chance to validate the No. 1 pick. ► C-
2. **Zach Miller / TE** (16/16) Set franchise record for receptions by a rookie and also blocked well. ► A-
3. **Quentin Moses / DE** (7/1) Cut at the end of training camp and was later signed by the Dolphins. ► D
- 3b. **Mario Henderson / OT** (1/0) Spent the entire season being groomed as a potential starter in 2008 or '09. ► INC
- 3c. **Johnnie Lee Higgins / WR** (16/2) Made almost no impact at receiver or punt returner. ► D
- 4a. **Michael Bush / RB** (0/0) Missed last season while rehabilitating from a knee injury sustained during his final collegiate season. ► INC
- 4b. **John Bowie / CB** (2/0) The player selected with the compensation pick in the Randy Moss trade played only a few snaps last year. ► D
- 5a. **Jay Richardson / DE** (16/11) Developed into a starter by midseason and showed promise. ► B
- 5b. **Eric Frampton / S** (14/0) Made an impact, just not for the Raiders, as he played for both Detroit and Minnesota last year. ► C
6. **Oren O'Neal / FB** (14/1) Developed into a potent blocker and core special teams player. ► A
7. **Jonathan Holland / WR** (0/0) Spent entire season rehabilitating an injury sustained in minicamp. ► INC



2007 RECORD: 8-8  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/eagles

# PHILADELPHIA

# EAGLES



## 5-YEAR RECORD C

The Eagles missed on too many picks in 2003 and '04, developing only three starters and just one Pro Bowl player from those drafts. Of the 16 selections during that time, only five are still with the club. Philadelphia has drafted better the past three seasons (eight starters have come from the 2005 and '06 drafts), but just five of last year's eight picks made the team. The development of QB Kevin Kolb into a potential starter will determine whether the '07 draft was a success—and if coach Andy Reid truly has an eye for quarterback talent.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	6	10	11	8	8
STUDS	0	1	0	0	0
STARTERS	1	0	5	3	0
BACKUPS	1	2	2	4	5
OTHER TEAMS	2	3	1	0	1
OUT OF NFL	2	4	3	1	2
YEARLY GRADE >	D	C-	A	C+	D

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE END** ▶ Eagles coach Andy Reid almost always gets the best available defensive lineman or offensive tackle with the team's top pick. Heading into 2008, the club needs a pass-rushing complement to Trent Cole and can't afford another miss on a defensive end. Ohio State's Vernon Gholston and Florida's Derrick Harvey would be a logical choice, if either is available at 19th overall.

**2. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** ▶ It's not an immediate need, but the Eagles rarely draft for the present. The club is solid with Pro Bowl bookend tackles William Thomas and Jon Runyan. But both are over 30 and approaching the twilight of their careers. Two-time Pro Bowl guard Shawn Andrews is viewed as a potential tackle down the road, however, he's too valuable on the interior right now. If Pittsburgh's Jeff Otah and Boise State's Ryan Clady are available, the Eagles should take a long look.

**3. CORNERBACK** ▶ This is another area in need of healthy, productive bodies, especially at nickel back. Lito Sheppard has missed 14 games over the past three seasons. Sheldon Brown is durable but doesn't create many turnovers and Will James lost his job to Jelio Hanson and probably won't be back. The club prefers small, physical corners who can handle one-on-one matchups—perhaps someone like South Florida's Mike Jenkins. However, Philadelphia probably won't draft a corner in the first round unless the best linemen are off the board.

**4. TIGHT END** ▶ L.J. Smith was given the franchise tag, but the Eagles don't have much else in backups Brent Celek and Matt Schobel. Celek, a fifth-round pick last April, showed potential in limited action last season, while Schobel's receptions total dropped for the sixth straight year. Notre Dame's John Carlson is considered a first-round selection, but could slip to the second or third round, which would entice the Eagles to use a pick here.

**5. WIDE RECEIVER** ▶ Philadelphia has drafted just one wideout in the first round under Reid—Freddie Mitchell, who's

been out of the league since 2004. Quarterback Donovan McNabb has publicly lobbied for a game-breaking receiver, but the club is more likely to find someone to upgrade its pathetic special teams. One target is California's DeSean Jackson, an electrifying return man who has elite receiver speed.

**6. SAFETY** ▶ The future of this position is cloudy. Six-time Pro Bowler Brian Dawkins spent too much time on the sideline last year and turns 35 in October. Sean Considine played undersized and out of position and will probably lose his job to impressive reserve Quintin Mikell. Miami's Kenny Phillips is considered one of the top playmakers in the draft and could be available at 19th if Philadelphia decides to go this route.

## OUTLOOK

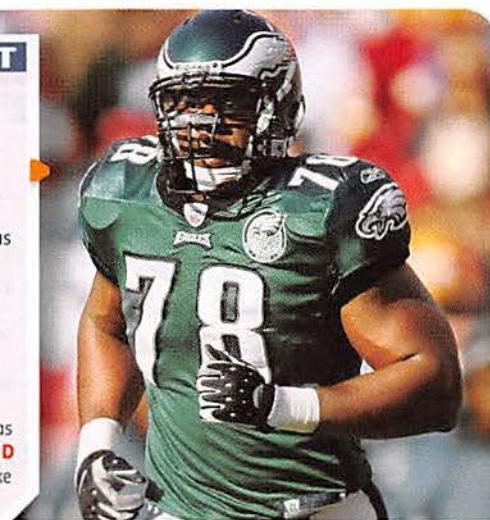
This could be one of the most profitable drafts in coach Andy Reid's tenure. The club should have nearly a dozen picks and possibly more if quarterback Donovan McNabb is traded. Reid has pulled the trigger on draft-day deals in eight of his nine drafts, including twice in the first round (2003 and '04). The draft is Reid's preferred tool for building teams for the future from the inside out, which is why he almost always takes the best available player regardless of position.

Reid, who doubles as the franchise's executive vice president of football operations, needs to hit on more first-day picks to maintain a reputation for personnel evaluation. His late-round drafting has been above average, but he's missed on some critical high-round picks over the past few years. The secondary needs help, but cornerbacks and safeties are always plentiful, so if Reid doesn't get one in the first or second round, he can find some later in the draft.

—Geoff Mosher, Wilmington News-Journal

## 2007 DRAFT

- 2a. **Kevin Kolb / QB** (1 game/0 starts) Made good decisions in preseason games and impressed coaches on the scout team, but judgment is reserved for the future. ► B
- 2b. **VICTOR ABIAMIRI / DE** (6/1) Showed good instincts against the run in limited action, but needs to create more pressure on the quarterback. ► C+
- 3a. **Stewart Bradley / LB** (16/1) Outstanding on special teams and was fast to the ball and aggressive in the blitz during his only start. ► B+
- 3b. **Tony Hunt / RB** (8/0) Averaged just 1.6 yards on 10 carries and struggled in blitz pickup. ► C
- 5a. **C.J. Gaddis / S** (0/0) Fell behind in minicamp, couldn't catch up in training camp and never made the club. ► F
- 5b. **Brent Celek / TE** (16/4) Surprised coaches with big-play potential downfield and was a solid blocker in scrimmage. ► B+
6. **Rashad Barksdale / CB** (6/0) Considered a project pre-draft, he was released on the final day of cuts and later signed with Kansas City. ► D
7. **Nate Iiaoia / RB** (0/0) Fumbling problems cost him a chance to make the team out of training camp. ► F



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

QB	■ Donovan McNabb
	○ Kevin Kolb
FB	○ Thomas Tapih
	● Jason Davis
RB	★ Brian Westbrook
	○ Correll Buckhalter
WR	■ Reggie Brown
	○ Jason Avant
WR	■ Kevin Curtis
	● Hank Baskett
TE	■ L.J. Smith
	○ Brent Celek
LT	■ William Thomas
	○ Winston Justice
LG	○ Todd Herremans
	● Scott Young
C	■ Jamaal Jackson
	○ Nick Cole
RG	★ Shawn Andrews
	○ Max Jean-Gilles
RT	■ Jon Runyan
	○ Winston Justice

### DEFENSE

LE	■ Juqua Thomas
	■ Victor Abiamiri
DT	■ Brodrick Bunkley
	● Kimo von Oelhoffen
DT	■ Mike Patterson
	● LaJuan Ramsey
RE	★ Trent Cole
	○ Darren Howard
OLB	■ Chris Gocong
	■ Stewart Bradley
MLB	■ Omar Gaither
	■ Stewart Bradley
OLB	■ Takeo Spikes
	○ Akeem Jordan
LCB	■ Lito Sheppard
	○ Jelio Hanson
SS	■ Quintin Mikell
	○ Sean Considine
FS	■ Brian Dawkins
	○ J.R. Reed
RCB	■ Sheldon Brown
	○ Tanard Davis

### SPECIALISTS

K	■ David Akers
P	○ Sav Rocca
KR	● J.R. Reed
PR	○ Bill Sampy
LS	○ Jon Dorenbos

# STEELERS


**PROJECTED DEPTH CHART**

<b>OFFENSE</b>	
QB	Ben Roethlisberger Charlie Batch
FB	Corey Davis
RB	Willie Parker Nojeh Davenport
WR	Santonio Holmes Cedrick Wilson
WR	Hines Ward Nate Washington
TE	Heath Miller Matt Spaeth
LT	Marvel Smith Trai Essex
LG	Chris Kemoeatu Sean Mahan
C	Darnell Stapleton Sean Mahan
RG	Kendall Simmons Chris Kemoeatu
RT	Willie Colon Max Starks

<b>DEFENSE</b>	
LE	Aaron Smith Nick Eason
NT	Casey Hampton Chris Hoke
RE	Brett Keisel Ryan McBean
OLB	James Harrison Lawrence Timmons
ILB	James Farrior Clint Kriewaldt
LB	Larry Foote Lawrence Timmons
OLB	LaMarr Woodley Arnold Harrison
LCB	Ike Taylor William Gay
SS	Troy Polamalu Tyrone Carter
FS	Ryan Clark Anthony Smith
RCB	Deshawn Townsend Bryant McFadden

<b>SPECIALISTS</b>	
K	Jeff Reed
P	Daniel Sepulveda
KR	Allen Rossum
PR	Allen Rossum
LS	Greg Warren

**5-YEAR RECORD** **B**

On one hand, the team has not done a great job of replacing starters with draft picks since 2003, nor has it drafted particularly well with its second-round selections. Over the last five years, the Steelers have drafted just six starters, with only one on the offensive line—one reason for their struggles in that area. For the most part, Pittsburgh has hit home runs with first-round picks, drafting SS Troy Polamalu, QB Ben Roethlisberger, TE Heath Miller and WR Santonio Holmes over that span.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	5	8	8	9	8
<b>STUDS</b>	1	0	0	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	1	1	1	3	1
<b>BACKUPS</b>	1	1	3	1	5
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	0	1	1	2	0
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	2	5	3	3	2
<b>YEARLY GRADE &gt;</b>	B+	C	C	B-	C

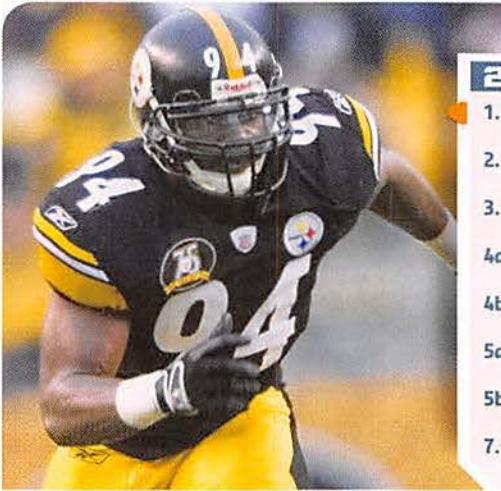
**FIRST-ROUND PICK** **23rd**
**NEEDS**

**1. CENTER** The Steelers never thought there would be such a big dropoff with the retirement of former Pro Bowl center Jeff Hartings, especially when they made Sean Mahan their only significant signing in free agency last year. But Mahan had problems handling big nose tackles in 3-4 defenses and it caused problems with the team's interior blocking schemes. Pittsburgh will try undrafted free agent Darnell Stapleton as Mahan's replacement, but could use a center who can handle tackles in one-on-one situations. Notre Dame's John Sullivan doesn't run well, but is strong at the point of attack.

**2. GUARD** The expected loss of seven-time Pro Bowl guard Alan Faneca will make this position another priority, mainly because Faneca was the key component in the team's signature running plays. The Steelers re-signed Kendall Simmons because they didn't want to replace both guards in the offseason, but there is little depth behind him. The position (center or guard) Pittsburgh addresses in free agency will dictate what is addressed first in the draft. Coach Mike Tomlin says the team needs bigger, stronger players on the line, so someone like Clemson's Chris McDuffie (6-4, 322) is a good possibility.

**3. DEFENSIVE END** The season-ending injury to Aaron Smith in Week 14 really hurt the rush defense and showed the lack of depth at this position. Ryan McBean, a fourth-round pick last year, could contribute this season if he gets bigger and stronger. Miami's Calais Campbell would be a perfect selection in the first round because he can rush and play the run. But Pittsburgh will likely wait to get a good run-stuffing defensive end in Round 2.

**4. INSIDE LINEBACKER** Lawrence Timmons, last year's first-round pick, will be given a chance to compete with Larry Foote for the starting inside linebacker spot this season. But the



team needs more depth here, particularly because James Farrior is 33 and in the final year of his contract. The Steelers probably won't address this position until at least the third round.

**5. CORNERBACK** Pittsburgh would be in greater need of a cornerback if veteran Deshea Townsend didn't have such an outstanding 2007 season. What's more, rookie William Gay played better than expected. Still, because of the attacking style the team prefers, defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau never turns away from a good cornerback.

**6. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** There isn't a position on the offensive line that won't be addressed in the draft, even though tackle is the least troublesome. The Steelers are set with starters Marvel Smith and Willie Colon, but depth could be an issue if Max Starks leaves via free agency.

**7. WIDE RECEIVER** Hines Ward proved in the 2007 postseason that he can still be a dominant wide receiver, while the emergence of Santonio Holmes has given the team a big-play threat with deep speed. Combine that with the development of Nate Washington, an undrafted free agent in 2005, and Pittsburgh seems content with its top three wideouts. But, like at cornerback, the Steelers never rule out a receiver in the draft, especially if he has speed.

**OUTLOOK**

A lot of what Pittsburgh does in the draft depends on what happens in free agency—specifically, which position on the offensive line will be addressed before draft day. The top priorities are guard and center. Don't be surprised if the first three picks are linemen, though the team could take an inside linebacker or cornerback by the third round.

In recent years, the Steelers have shown a penchant for trading up to get a desired player, or to address a particular need, doing so twice in the first round over the past five years. That could happen again if there's a guard or center worthy of moving up into the top 15 of the draft.

—Gerry Dulac, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

**2007 DRAFT**

- LAWRENCE TIMMONS / OLB** (16 games/0 starts) An athletic and talented player who needs to take a big step in 2008. ► C
- LaMarr Woodley / OLB** (13/0) Showed enough to be a starter and a major contributor this season. ► B+
- Matt Spaeth / TE** (14/5) Got off to a fast start, but a long season took its toll on his production. ► C
- a. Daniel Sepulveda / P** (16/0) Played well early and tired late in the year. ► B-
- b. Ryan McBean / DE** (1/0) Was drafted to develop and grow, so he didn't get much playing time. ► C-
- Cameron Stephenson / G** (0/0) Couldn't win a spot at a position where there is little depth. ► F
- William Gay / CB** (16/0) A rookie surprise who needs to get stronger and tougher. ► C+
- Dallas Baker / WR** (0/0) This undersized player stayed on the practice squad all year. ► D



2007 RECORD: 3-13  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/rams

ST. LOUIS

# RAMS



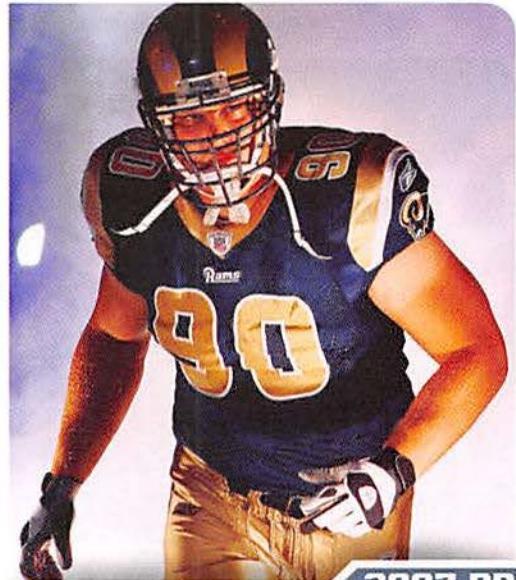
## 5-YEAR RECORD C

St. Louis has been merely average over the past five years, and is still paying for its miserable drafts from 2000-02 during the "Greatest Show on Turf" era. The only player remaining from that time is LS Chris Massey. Since then, the Rams have drafted only one Pro Bowl player, RB Steven Jackson, along with some big-time whiffs in the third round, including LB Jon Alson and TE Dominique Byrd. However, LB Pisa Tinoisamoa ('03), S Oshiomogho Atogwe ('05), CB Tye Hill ('06) and DT Adam Carricker ('07) all have been solid picks.

## NEEDS

**1. DEFENSIVE END** Leonard Little turns 34 in October and is coming off a one-sack season in which he played only seven games because of a toe injury that required surgery. The other starter, 31-year-old James Hall, is entering the final year of his contract and didn't make many plays last season. An edge rusher is a must; an every-down end who can also rush the passer would be ideal. For all of those reasons, Virginia's Chris Long makes a lot of sense at the No. 2 overall pick. Although not a natural pass rusher, Long registered 14 sacks last season with the Cavaliers.

**2. WIDE RECEIVER** Torry Holt is still a very effective wideout, but he has a chronic knee problem that may not improve. Isaac Bruce turns 36 in November and, while he can still get open, his quickness is gone. A big, speedy pass-catcher



## 2007 DRAFT

- 1. ADAM CARRICKER / DT** (16 games/16 starts) Is strong at the point of attack with the versatility to play nose tackle and defensive end. ► B
- 2. Brian Leonard / RB/FB** (16/7) This jack-of-all-trades saw duty as feature back, third-down back and blocking fullback. ► C+
- 3. Jonathan Wade / CB** (16/1) Used earlier than expected at nickel back, he has size and speed but needs technique work. ► C-
- 4a. Dustin Fry / C** (4/0) Spent most of last season on the practice squad and needs to add more strength. ► D
- 5b. Clifton Ryan / DT** (16/0) A pleasant surprise who made a quick transition to the NFL at nose tackle. ► B
- 6. Ken Shackleford / OT** (0/0) Cut in training camp, as he failed to show the strength and athleticism the NFL requires. ► F
- 7a. Keith Jackson / DT** (0/0) Played with heart and energy, but lacks the size to succeed at this level. ► D
- 7b. Derek Stanley / WR** (3/0) Spent most of last year on the practice squad, but flashed kick-return skills late in the season. ► C+

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 2nd

would be an ideal addition to a receiving corps that also includes 2007 disappointment Drew Bennett. Unfortunately for the Rams, there isn't a candidate in this year's draft with top-10 talent. If St. Louis doesn't fill this need in free agency, the team will look for help in the second or third rounds from someone like Oklahoma's Malcolm Kelly.

**3. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** Can the Rams get 16 games out of seven-time Pro Bowler Orlando Pace? He has started only nine games over the past two years because of season-ending shoulder and triceps injuries. If St. Louis thinks he can stay healthy, it can look for depth and a future starter after Round 1. But if the Rams have any concerns about Pace's durability, they'd better seriously consider Michigan's Jake Long.

**4. CENTER** Immediate help is needed on the interior due to age and injury. This could be a position that the team tries to address via free agency. However, if the Rams look for help in the draft, someone like Arizona State's Mike Pollak could be an option in the second or third rounds.

**5. CORNERBACK** Teams can never have enough players at this position. Even after taking Tye Hill in the first round two years ago and Jonathan Wade in Round 3 last year, the Rams could look for even more help. Fakhir Brown has had off-field issues, while Ron Bartell is scheduled for free agency after the 2008 season.

**6. SAFETY** Corey Chavous will return for his third season in St. Louis, but is 32. The Rams need to start thinking about grooming a replacement. For draft purposes, this doesn't have to take place in the first two rounds, but players such as Michigan's Jamar Adams, LSU's Craig Steltz and Kentucky's Wesley Woodyard should be available during the second day.

## OUTLOOK

With the No. 2 overall selection, the Rams are in prime position to fill one of their two most pressing needs. One of the two Longs (no relation)—defensive end Chris and offensive tackle Jake—should be there when St. Louis picks. It's not hard to make a case for LSU defensive tackle Glenn Dorsey either, even with the strong rookie seasons by Adam Carricker and Clifton Ryan. With Dorsey in the lineup, Carricker would be freed up to play defensive end, particularly on run sets.

With Steven Jackson entering the final year of his contract, Arkansas' Darren McFadden also presents an intriguing option and would give St. Louis a solid one-two punch at running back in 2008. It's not out of the question for the Rams to dangle Jackson as trade bait, or trade down a few spots with a team trying to move up for McFadden or another top prospect. With the second and 34th picks, St. Louis desperately needs to find players who can contribute right away.

—Jim Thomas, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

QB ■ Marc Bulger  
○ Gus Frerotte

FB ○ Brian Leonard  
● Richard Owens

RB ★ Steven Jackson  
● Antonio Pittman

WR ★ Torry Holt  
○ Dane Looker

WR ○ Drew Bennett  
○ Isaac Bruce

TE ■ Randy McMichael  
○ Joe Klopfenstein

LT ○ Alex Barron

LG ○ Mark Setterstrom  
● Dustin Fry

C ○ Brett Romberg  
● Nick Leckey

RG ■ Richie Incognito  
○ Todd Steussie

RT ○ Alex Barron  
● Brandon Gorin

### DEFENSE

LE ■ Leonard Little  
○ Victor Adeyanju

DT ○ La'Roi Glover  
● Claude Wrotten

DT ■ Adam Carricker  
○ Clifton Ray

RE ○ James Hall  
● Eric Moore

SLB ■ Chris Draft  
○ Quinton Culberson

MLB ■ Will Witherspoon  
● Tim McGarigle

WLB ■ Pisa Tinoisamoa  
● Quinton Culberson

LCB ○ Tye Hill  
○ Ron Bartell

SS ○ Corey Chavous  
○ Todd Johnson

FS ■ Oshiomogho Atogwe  
● Jerome Carter

RCB ■ Fakhir Brown  
● Jonathan Wade

### SPECIALISTS

K ■ Jeff Wilkins

P ■ Donnie Jones

KR ■ Dante Hall

PR ■ Dante Hall

LS ■ Chris Massey

## CHARGERS

2007 RECORD: 11-5  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/chargers

## 5-YEAR RECORD A-

The team's last five drafts display how Chargers G.M. A.J. Smith has built this franchise into one of the league's biggest successes. His selections have been among the league's best, with San Diego drafting and then trading Eli Manning for QB Philip Rivers and the picks that eventually netted K Nate Kaeding and OLB Shawne Merriman. The team's '06 first-round choice was CB Antonio Cromartie, who led the NFL with 10 interceptions last year. Over this span, San Diego has drafted six Pro Bowlers, with 14 expected to start in 2008.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	8	11*	7	8	7
STUDS	0	0	1	0	0
STARTERS	3	6	2	2	0
BACKUPS	1	2	2	3	7
OTHER TEAMS	2	1	1	1	0
OUT OF NFL	2	2	1	2	0
YEARLY GRADE >	C	A	A	A-	C

\*Eli Manning is graded as a Giants pick, though he was drafted by the Chargers

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

- ★ Elite
- Solid
- Adequate
- Fringe

## OFFENSE

QB	Philip Rivers Charlie Whitehurst
FB	Lorenzo Neal Andrew Pinnock
RB	LaDainian Tomlinson Darren Sproles
WR	Vincent Jackson Buster Davis
WR	Chris Chambers Legedu Naanee
TE	Antonio Gates Brandon Manumaleuna
LT	Marcus McNeill
LG	Kris Dielman Scott Mruczkowski
C	Nick Hardwick Cory Withrow
RG	Mike Goff Scott Mruczkowski
RT	Jeromey Clary Shane Olivea

## DEFENSE

LE	Luis Castillo Jacques Cesaire
DT	Jamal Williams Brandon McKinney
DT	Igor Olshansky Ryon Bingham
RE	Shawne Merriman Jyles Tucker
OLB	Matt Wilhelm Anthony Waters
MLB	Stephen Cooper Brandon Siler
OLB	Shaun Phillips Marques Harris
LCB	Quentin Jammer Cletis Gordon
SS	Clinton Hart Steve Gregory
FS	Eric Weddle Paul Oliver
RBC	Antonio Cromartie

## SPECIALISTS

K	Nate Kaeding
P	Mike Scifres
KR	Darren Sproles
PR	Darren Sproles
LS	Dave Binn

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 27th

## NEEDS

**1. CORNERBACK** Drayton Florence isn't expected to re-sign with the Chargers in the offseason, leaving the team with a big void at backup cornerback. San Diego selected Paul Oliver in the fourth round of last summer's supplemental draft to prepare for Florence's departure. But Oliver will likely be converted to safety and play in the dime package this season. The Chargers may target Oklahoma's Reggie Smith or Troy's Leodis McElvin in the first round.

**2. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** So much has happened here for the Chargers, and so much more could happen in the coming year. Shane Olivea lost his starting job midseason and Jeromey Clary did a fine job filling in. But neither is an elite player, and Olivea may move inside to guard. The Chargers could be in the market for a starter and reach for Boston College's Gosder Cherilus in the first round.

**3. RUNNING BACK** Michael Turner is likely to move into a starting role with another team, so the Chargers need a backup to LaDainian Tomlinson. Darren Sproles was spectacular in spot duty last season, but can't be counted on to carry the load in the event of disaster with Tomlinson. The Chargers will try and strike gold the way they did with Turner in the fifth round in 2004. With that as a guide, the team could look at Tulane's Matt Forte, the Senior Bowl MVP.

**4. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** If the Chargers become enamored with a player who could play nose tackle (such as North Carolina's Kentwan Balmer), this would be the year to spend a first-round pick on the position. But the team isn't as concerned about Jamal Williams' durability as everyone else seems to be. Williams had another Pro Bowl season despite struggling with knee and ankle injuries.

**5. SAFETY** Marlon McCree will likely be released in the offseason and replaced by Eric Weddle, with Oliver moving into Weddle's spot. Depth at this position is now a major concern. Clinton Hart will be given another year to show he can be a consistent performer at strong safety, but the Chargers could be looking for help here down the road.

**6. GUARD** Depending on what happens with Olivea, San Diego may need to address this position in the draft, especially with an eye toward the future. Right guard Mike Goff's contract expires after 2008. He will be 33 and have 11 NFL seasons of wear and tear by then. The Chargers could let him go and, even if they turn the job over to Olivea or Scott Mruczkowski, they are interested in having more options and injury protection.

## OUTLOOK

The Chargers go into draft weekend with only four picks (plus a likely fourth-round supplemental selection), and this is a good year for them to be light. All but one starter is expected to return in 2008, and 35

players are signed through '09. There seems to be no reason for general manager A.J. Smith to do so, but if he falls in love with a player, he's never afraid to make a move to trade up. In 2007, Smith traded away the team's second-, third- and fifth-round picks plus this year's third-round selection to move up 25 spots to take Eric Weddle with the fifth pick of the second round.

Two years ago, only two of San Diego's five second-day choices made the team. But in 2007, all six draft selections stuck for the entire season. With so much freedom, the Chargers can mix and match when and where they take a cornerback, running back, offensive tackle and safety. While a cornerback is imperative and a running back is needed to groom behind Tomlinson, the final three selections will likely depend on who is available. It is most likely, however, that San Diego will use the later rounds to shore up depth and stoke competition on the line and in the secondary.

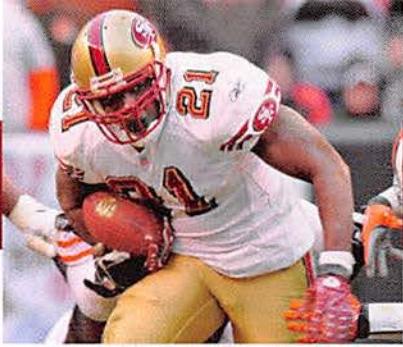
—Kevin Acee, San Diego Union-Tribune



## 2007 DRAFT

- CRAIG DAVIS / WR** (14 games/1 start) Put injuries behind him and came up with big catches late in the season. ► B
- Eric Weddle / S** (15/0) With improvement, he gained more playing time as the year progressed and will likely start in 2008. ► A-
- Anthony Waters / ILB** (0/0) A restoration project in 2007 following ACL surgery, this could be the season he ascends the depth chart. ► C
- Scott Chandler / TE** (1/0) This third-string tight end was an adequate blocker with pass-catching ability who still has a lot to learn. ► C
- Legedu Naanee / WR** (13/0) Versatile with star potential, he'll be a big part of the offense in the coming years. ► A-
- Brandon Siler / ILB** (15/0) A special teams demon who can provide depth. ► B-
- Paul Oliver / CB** (0/0) A project since he came out so late, he'll likely move to safety in 2008. ► C

\*Supplemental pick



2007 RECORD: 5-11  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/49ers

# SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	7	10	11	9	9
STUDS	0	0	0	0	1
STARTERS	1	2	4	3	1
BACKUPS	1	3	3	4	6
OTHER TEAMS	4	0	2	1	0
OUT OF NFL	1	5	2	1	1
YEARLY GRADE >	D	C	B	B	A

## 5-YEAR RECORD

B

In the three years since coach Mike Nolan and now-G.M. Scot McCloskey arrived, the 49ers have significantly upgraded the level of talent on their roster. Pro Bowl-caliber players such as RB Frank Gore, ILB Patrick Willis and OT Joe Staley have all been added over that span. But questions remain about their first and most important pick, QB Alex Smith, who was the No. 1 overall selection in 2005. Smith seemed to regress in his development last year even before he was sidelined by a shoulder separation that eventually required season-ending surgery.



## NEEDS

**1. WIDE RECEIVER** » The 49ers have to get serious about adding an impact wideout, especially with the offseason addition of offensive coordinator Mike Martz. In order to build his varied attack around running back Frank Gore, Martz needs a receiver who can stretch the field and draw extra defensive attention. No one on the team has filled the bill in recent years, and it may take committing the first- or second-round pick to Houston's Donnie Avery, Michigan's Mario Manningham, Vanderbilt's Earl Bennett or Florida's Andre Caldwell.

**2. DEFENSIVE END** » The defensive line lost a stalwart with the recent retirement of Bryant Young. Even if the 49ers re-sign free-agent defensive end Marques Douglas, they're going to have to bolster the depth here. San Francisco could take a long, hard look at USC's Sedrick Ellis and Lawrence Jackson, Auburn's Pat Sims and Miami's Calais Campbell.

**3. GUARD** » With Larry Allen's likely retirement and Justin Smiley eligible for free agency, shoring up the interior line is a concern. The 49ers are thin at guard beyond prospective starters Adam Snyder and David Baas, and need to bolster an offensive line that gave up a franchise record 55 sacks last season. Oregon State's Roy Schuening, Tennessee's Eric Young and Arkansas' Robert Felton are middle-round options.

**4. INSIDE LINEBACKER** » The 49ers are set at weak inside linebacker with Patrick Willis, who was named the NFL's top defensive rookie last season and made the Pro Bowl. But there are questions at strong inside linebacker. Potential high-round picks include Oklahoma's Curtis Lofton and UNLV's Beau Bell.

**5. RIGHT TACKLE** » Joe Staley's planned move to left tackle leaves a hole to fill at right tackle, where Staley started

every game last season as a rookie. Jonas Jennings could be moved from the left to the right side, but questions about his durability make it likely that the 49ers will look to add depth at this spot. UTEP's Orien Cousins and Virginia Tech's Duane Brown are potential selections.

**6. QUARTERBACK** » After seeing injuries sideline their top three quarterbacks last season, it's not out of the question that the 49ers will add a signal-caller they can develop for the future. With the competition for the starting job expected to center on Alex Smith and Shaun Hill, the 49ers could bring a draft pick along slowly. Some mid- to late-round possibilities include San Diego's Josh Johnson, Oregon's Dennis Dixon, San Diego State's Kevin O'Connell and Tulsa's Paul Smith.

## OUTLOOK

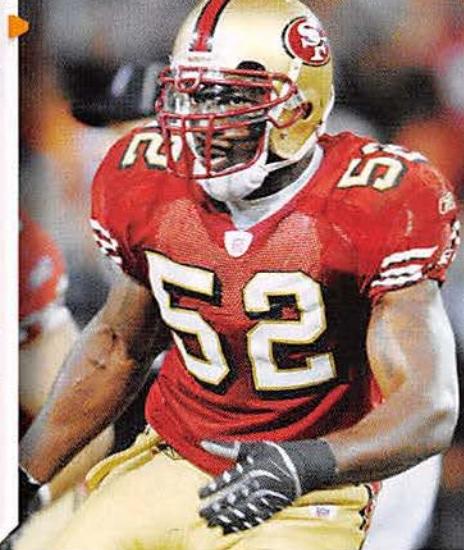
Scot McCloskey heads into his first draft since being promoted to general manager after three years as the vice president of player personnel. He will be seeking playmakers for an offense that floundered last season, generating the fewest yards and points in the league.

McCloskey also figures to make bolstering the offensive and defensive lines a priority. San Francisco is without its first-round selection (seventh overall), but does have the 29th pick from Indianapolis. The 49ers swapped their top 2008 selection in exchange for the Patriots' 2007 first-round choice that San Francisco used on Joe Staley. The 49ers moved back into the first round for this year's draft when they sent their second-round pick in return for Indianapolis' 2008 first-round selection.

—Dennis Georgatos, San Jose Mercury News

## 2007 DRAFT

- 1a. PATRICK WILLIS / ILB** (16 games/16 starts) Won Defensive-Rookie-of-the-Year honors after leading the NFL in tackles in 2007. ► A+
- 1b. Joe Staley / OT** (16/16) After starting every game at right tackle as a rookie, he'll likely make the move to left tackle in 2008, where he could protect the blindside for the next decade. ► A
- 3a. Jason Hill / WR** (5/0) Injuries limited his opportunities last season, but he has flashed speed and potential when healthy. ► C
- 3b. Ray McDonald / DE** (9/0) Worked his way into the defensive line rotation in the second half of last season and showed some promise in the pass rush. ► C
- 4a. Jay Moore / OLB** (0/0) Spent his rookie season on injured reserve after suffering a severe ankle sprain in the exhibition finale. ► INC
- 4b. Dashon Goldson / S** (10/0) Began playing in substitution packages as an extra defensive back in the second half of the season and showed speed, instinct and a physical style. ► B
- 4c. Joe Cohen / NT** (0/0) Spent his rookie season on injured reserve after suffering a knee injury during the exhibition finale. ► INC
- 5. Tarell Brown / CB** (9/0) Contributed on special teams and as a reserve cornerback, but tore his MCL and ACL in the regular-season finale and could be limited in 2008. ► C
- 6. Thomas Clayton / RB** (0/0) Spent the year on the practice squad imitating the opposing team's top running back. ► C



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

QB	○ Alex Smith ○ Shaun Hill
FB	○ Moran Norris ○ Michael Robinson
RB	★ Frank Gore ○ Michael Robinson
WR	○ Darrell Jackson ○ Ashley Lelie
WR	○ Arno Battle ● Jason Hill
TE	■ Vernon Davis ○ Delanie Walker
LT	■ Joe Staley ○ Adam Snyder
LG	○ Adam Snyder
C	○ Eric Heitmann ● Tony Wragge
RG	■ David Baas ● Tony Wragge
RT	○ Jonas Jennings ● Damane Dockett

### DEFENSE

LE	○ Ronald Fields ○ Ray McDonald
NT	○ Aubrayo Franklin ○ Isaac Sopoaga
RE	○ Marques Douglas ○ Ray McDonald
OLB	■ Manny Lawson ○ Parys Haralson
ILB	★ Patrick Willis ○ Jeff Ulrich
ILB	○ Jeff Ulrich ○ Brandon Moore
OLB	○ Tully Banta-Cain ○ Parys Haralson
LCB	■ Nate Clements ○ Shawntae Spencer
SS	■ Michael Lewis ○ Keith Lewis
FS	■ Mark Roman ○ Dashon Goldson
RCB	○ Walt Harris ○ Donald Strickland

### SPECIALISTS

K	■ Joe Nedney
P	★ Andy Lee
KR	○ Delanie Walker
PR	■ Nate Clements
LS	■ Brian Jennings

## SEAHAWKS

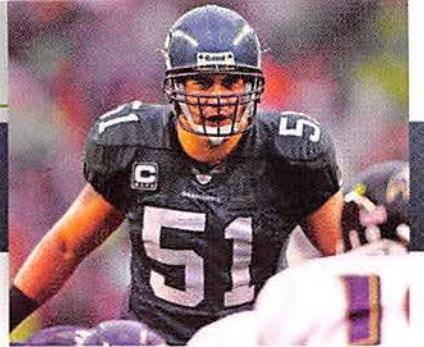

**PROJECTED DEPTH CHART**

Elite  
Solid  
Adequate  
Fringe

<b>OFFENSE</b>	
QB	Matt Hasselbeck Seneca Wallace
FB	Leonard Weaver David Kirtman
RB	Shaun Alexander Maurice Morris
WR	Bobby Engram Deion Branch
TE	Nate Burleson Courtney Taylor
LT	Walter Jones Floyd Womack
LG	Mike Wahle Rob Sims
C	Chris Spencer Chris Gray
RG	Ray Willis Mansfield Wrotto
RT	Sean Locklear Tom Ashworth
<b>DEFENSE</b>	
LE	Patrick Kerney Ellis Wyms
DT	Rocky Bernard Craig Terrill
DT	Brandon Mebane Marcus Tubbs
RE	Darryl Tapp Baraka Atkins
OLB	Leroy Hill Kevin Bentley
MLB	Lofa Tatupu Niko Koutouvides
OLB	Julian Peterson Lance Laury
LCB	Marcus Trufant Jordan Babineaux
SS	Deon Grant Mike Green
FS	Brian Russell Jordan Babineaux
RBC	Kelly Jennings Josh Wilson
<b>SPECIALISTS</b>	
K	Josh Brown
P	Ryan Plackemeier
KR	Nate Burleson
PR	Nate Burleson
LS	Jeff Robinson

**5-YEAR RECORD B-**

The 2003-07 drafts delivered two Pro Bowl players (CB Marcus Trufant and MLB Lofa Tatupu) and eight other starters. There have been misses, like everyone in the '05 class save Tatupu, OLB Leroy Hill and C Chris Spencer. But the hits have stocked the roster with a good nucleus, including K Josh Brown ('03), RT Sean Locklear ('04), CB Kelly Jennings ('06) and DT Brandon Mebane ('07). The group would be even stronger if the club had not made first-day picks in 2003 (OT Wayne Hunter), '04 (S Michael Boulware) and '05 (QB David Greene) that failed to work out.



	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	9	7	9	6	8
<b>STUDS</b>	1	0	1	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	1	1	2	4	1
<b>BACKUPS</b>	1	4	1	2	4
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	2	2	1	0	0
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	4	0	4	0	3
<b>YEARLY GRADE &gt;</b>	C+	C	B+	B+	D+

**FIRST-ROUND PICK 25th**
**NEEDS**

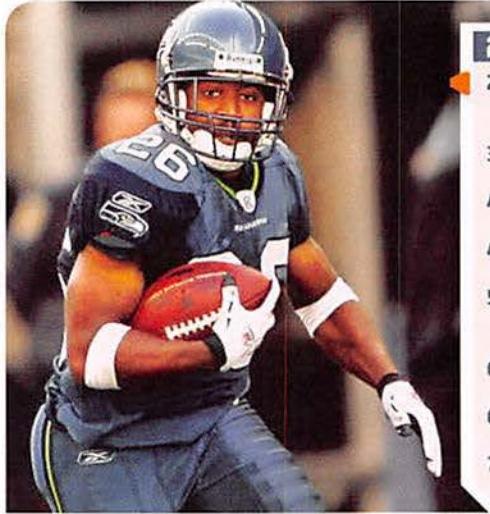
**1. RUNNING BACK** The big question, of course, is what does the club do with Shaun Alexander, who has had two injury-interrupted seasons of diminishing production since his record-setting league MVP effort in 2005? While Seattle is enamored with the prospect of adding Oregon's Jonathan Stewart (who is a local boy), it might have to opt for Illinois' Rashard Mendenhall if Stewart goes before the 25th pick, as expected.

**2. TIGHT END** The element that has set coach Mike Holmgren's version of the West Coast offense apart from the others being run in the league is the use of the tight end to stretch the middle of the field in the passing game. The club must address this position with a first-day pick, and could opt for Notre Dame's John Carlson or Texas' Jermichael Finley.

**3. GUARD** This has been a sore spot since the Seahawks let All-Pro left guard Steve Hutchinson go in free agency two years ago. Arkansas' Robert Felton is a strong run blocker who would need some work in his pass protection, while Virginia's Branden Albert has a combination of intelligence and size.

**4. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** Former first-round draft choice Marcus Tubbs remains the X-factor here. The club cannot count on him to provide the needed wide body in the middle of its undersized defense, as he missed most of 2006 and all of '07 due to multiple knee problems. One possibility here is Texas A&M's Red Bryant (6-5, 326), while other options include Auburn's Pat Sims and North Carolina's Kentwan Balmer.

**5. WIDE RECEIVER** A West Coast offense can never have enough wideout options, especially ones with size. With Deion Branch looking at a lengthy rehab (knee surgery), the club possibly deciding not to re-sign injury-prone D.J. Hackett and 2007 leading wideout Bobby Engram now 35 years old, depth



is needed. Options that could entice the Seahawks include Vanderbilt's Earl Bennett and California's Lavelle Hawkins.

**6. SAFETY** Last year's free-agent signings of safeties Deon Grant and Brian Russell were perhaps a big reason why the defense only allowed a league-low 15 touchdown passes. However a young, athletic safety who can help on special teams while developing into an eventual starter would benefit the team. It's not a strong year for safety prospects, but middle-round possibilities include Notre Dame's Tom Zbikowski and California's Thomas DeCoud.

**7. LINEBACKER** Why does a team that already has the Pro Bowl tandem of Lofa Tatupu and Julian Peterson and a third starter with All-Pro potential in Leroy Hill need more linebackers? Two words: special teams. Linebackers comprise the core of the coverage units, and the Seahawks are always looking for fast, aggressive ones. If Seattle waits until the fourth or fifth round, BYU's Bryan Kehl or Colorado's Jordon Dizon would fit the scheme.

**OUTLOOK**

Seahawks president Tim Russel is a proponent of the build-through-the-draft philosophy he learned while working under Jerry Angelo and Rich McKay in Tampa Bay. Russel has rebuilt the defense since arriving in 2005, using six of the team's eight first-day picks to select linebackers Lofa Tatupu and Leroy Hill, cornerbacks Kelly Jennings and Josh Wilson and linemen Darryl Tapp and Brandon Mebane.

Only two starters on the '07 defense were holdovers from the previous regime before Russel arrived. Now, it's the offense that needs upgrading—starting with an infusion of youth and talent at running back, tight end and the offensive line. Constructing and supplementing the defense is and always has been Russel's forte. But he will have to show that he's equally adept at restocking an offense for Seattle to sustain its success.

—Clare Farnsworth, Seattle Post-Intelligencer

**2007 DRAFT**

- 2. JOSH WILSON / CB** (12 games/0 starts) Expected to challenge for the nickel back role, but injuries helped reduce his season to situational contributions. ► C
- 3. Brandon Mebane / DT** (16/10) A pleasant surprise who was forced into the lineup because of injuries. ► B+
- 4a. Baraka Atkins / DE** (12/0) Showed promise as a pass rusher, but produced little in limited opportunities. ► C-
- 4b. Mansfield Wrotto / G** (0/0) Active for only one game and needs a lot of work. ► D
- 5. Will Herring / LB** (12/0) Limited to special teams because the Seahawks are loaded at linebacker, he finished third on the team with 14 coverage tackles. ► C+
- 6a. Courtney Taylor / WR** (8/0) Although production was limited to five receptions, his potential is what impressed the coaches. ► C+
- 6b. Jordan Kent / WR** (0/0) Athletic ability was obvious, but he needs to refine his skills as a receiver. ► INC
- 7. Steve Vallos / G** (0/0) Another practice-squad player who showed versatility by playing center and guard. ► INC



2007 RECORD: 9-7  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/buccaneers

TAMPA BAY

# BUCCANEERS

## 5-YEAR RECORD C-

Tampa Bay G.M. Bruce Allen has yet to establish himself as a keen judge of college talent. His work on draft day has been mostly substandard except for RB Cadillac Williams, who is now facing a lengthy rehab. Allen has especially struggled to find true talent on the second day. He appeared to choose wisely a year ago, but desperately needs to have another good run of picks this season. Otherwise, the Buccaneers will likely fall back into the middle of the pack.

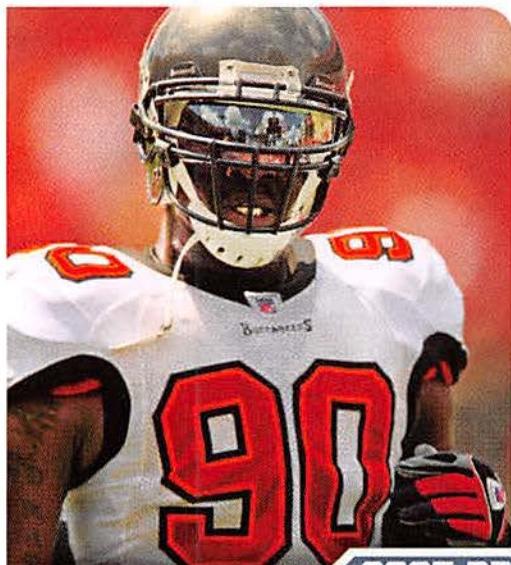


	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	6	8	12	10	10
<b>STUDS</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	0	0	3	2	3
<b>BACKUPS</b>	2	2	3	3	6
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	2	3	2	1	0
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	2	3	4	4	1
<b>YEARLY GRADE &gt;</b>	D	D-	C+	C	B+

## NEEDS

**1. WIDE RECEIVER** This was an area of need last year, and the Buccaneers did nothing about it. However, they can't afford to ignore it again. Even if Tampa Bay has to trade up, an impact wideout must be landed. Joey Galloway and Ike Hilliard are getting older, while the team seems to have little or no confidence in Michael Clayton and Maurice Stovall. LSU's Early Doucet is an obvious target, but if he's gone by the 20th pick, the Bucs could fill the need by drafting Oklahoma State's Adarius Bowman.

**2. CORNERBACK** Ronde Barber and Brian Kelly are aging, with Kelly beginning to break down. He has missed 19 games combined over the last two seasons, and his reliability is diminishing. Depending on how their draft board sets up,



## 2007 DRAFT

- Gaines Adams / DE** (16 games/8 starts) Was a force as both a pass rusher and run stopper when the season ended. ► B
- Aaron Sears / G** (16/16) Established himself as the team's left guard for years to come with a strong first season. ► B
- Sabby Piscitelli / S** (3/0) Was on injured reserve the entire season after suffering a foot injury in Week 3. ► INC
- Quincy Black / LB** (15/0) Spent most of his time working special teams, but showed flashes of ability on defense. ► C
- Tanard Jackson / S** (16/16) Won a starting job in training camp, but now must recover from a torn MCL. ► B
- Greg Peterson / DT** (10/0) His adaptation to the pro game was slowed even more by a late-season knee injury. ► D
- Adam Hayward / LB** (12/0) Helped improve the special teams unit, but saw limited time on defense. ► C-
- Chris Denman / OT** (0/0) Spent the season on the practice squad. ► F
- Marcus Hamilton / CB** (0/0) Failed to distinguish himself on special teams or defense. ► F
- Kenneth Darby / RB** (1/0) Played well enough in camp to earn a spot on the practice squad, and eventually the 53-man roster. ► C

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 21st

the Bucs could go for a cornerback in the first round. Tampa Bay may need to look no further than its own backyard for a top prospect in South Florida's Mike Jenkins.

**3. RUNNING BACK** There's a chance Cadillac Williams will never play again after he tore his patellar tendon last season. Even if he does, Williams may never be the same player. Tampa Bay has a very capable all-around back in Earnest Graham, but with Michael Pittman and Michael Bennett heading for free agency, the team could use some depth. Luckily for the Bucs, this may be one of the best running-back drafts in years. Oregon's Jonathan Stewart may be available in the first round, but Tampa Bay could probably wait until the second or third round to land a top-level player such as Rutgers' Ray Rice or West Virginia's Steve Slaton.

**4. TIGHT END** Alex Smith is a solid player, but it doesn't look like he'll ever reach elite status. Tampa Bay also has an aging Anthony Becht, who could be lost to free agency, and Jerramy Stevens, who's inconsistent on and off the field. This is probably a second-day target area, but the Bucs wouldn't rule out taking a tight end on Day 1 if the right player falls to their spot.

**5. CENTER** John Wade is still a very serviceable pro, one who could continue to man this position for at least another two years. However, the team needs to prepare for the day Wade is gone or goes down with an injury. The Bucs have the option of moving guard Dan Buening to this spot, but would be better served by drafting a center of the future, allowing them to improve the depth across the offensive front.

**6. DEFENSIVE END** The Bucs found a gem with Gaines Adams in last year's draft, but the belief is a team can never have too many good pass rushers. Tampa Bay could use the second day of the draft to take advantage of an area that appears to be very deep this year.

## OUTLOOK

Simply put, the Buccaneers need playmakers on offense. After drafting mostly for the defensive side last year, the team will almost certainly look to beef up its offensive arsenal. Tampa Bay should go after skill players such as wide receivers, running backs and tight ends with every pick on Day 1. The team has some players to dangle in trades, including quarterback Chris Simms, so don't be surprised if the Bucs make a deal.

One thing Tampa Bay is sure to look for is an impact return man. The Bucs still aren't comfortable with their array of punt and kick returners, so they may use a middle-round pick to fill that need. Long known for its defense, Tampa Bay won't ignore that side of the ball in the draft. The Bucs need to find a cornerback and possibly a defensive end to push and eventually replace older players.

—Roy Cummings, Tampa Tribune

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

### OFFENSE

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

QB	★ Jeff Garcia ● Luke McCown
FB	■ B.J. Askew ● Byron Storer
RB	■ Ernest Graham ● Kenneth Darby
WR	■ Joey Galloway ● Paris Warren
WR	■ Ike Hilliard ● Michael Clayton
TE	■ Alex Smith ● Jerramy Stevens
LT	○ Donald Penn ● Anthony Davis
LG	■ Arron Sears ● Anthony Davis
C	○ John Wade ● Matt Lehr
RG	■ Davin Joseph ● Matt Lehr
RT	○ Jeremy Trueblood ● Dennis Roland

### DEFENSE

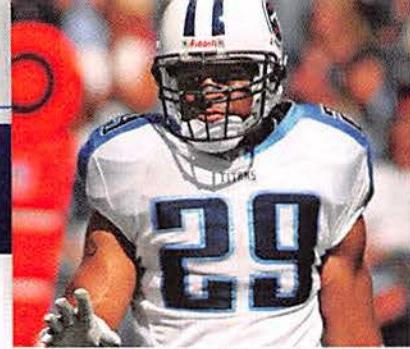
LE	○ Kevin Carter ■ Gaines Adams
NT	■ Chris Hovan ● Ryan Sims
DT	■ Jovan Haye ○ Kevin Carter
RE	■ Gaines Adams ■ Greg White
SLB	★ Cato June ■ Ryan Nece
MLB	■ Barrett Ruud ● Jeremiah Trotter
WLB	★ Derrick Brooks ★ Cato June
LCB	■ Phillip Buchanon ● Brian Kelly
SS	■ Jermaine Phillips ■ Kelvin Pearson
FS	■ Tanard Jackson ● Will Allen
RCB	★ Ronde Barber ■ Phillip Buchanon

### SPECIALISTS

K	■ Matt Bryant
P	★ Josh Bidwell
KR	○ Michael Spurlock
PR	○ Michael Spurlock
LS	● Andrew Eonomos

TENNESSEE

## TITANS

2007 RECORD: 10-6  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/titans

## 5-YEAR RECORD C

It's a wonder the Titans are a team on the upswing, because the draft classes that should have set the team up for a rebound have seen many players flop. The 2003 group didn't produce one starter for the '07 club, and only two (RB Chris Brown and S Donnie Nickey) of the six picks remain on the roster. General manager Mike Reinfeldt hasn't been around long enough to be judged, but the players from last year's draft class have to improve to make his first body of work respectable.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
TOTAL PICKS	6	13	11	10	10
STUDS	0	0	0	0	0
STARTERS	0	2	5	4	1
BACKUPS	2	6	4	2	6
OTHER TEAMS	0	2	1	1	0
OUT OF NFL	4	3	1	3	3
YEARLY GRADE >	F	D	B	B	C-

## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite
■ Solid
○ Adequate
● Fringe

## OFFENSE

- QB ○ Vince Young
- Kerry Collins

- FB ■ Ahmard Hall
- Casey Cramer

- RB ■ LenDale White
- Chris Henry

- WR ○ Roydell Williams
- Biren Ealy

- WR ○ Justin Gage
- Chris Davis

- TE ○ Bo Scaife
- Ben Hartsock

- LT ■ Michael Roos
- Daniel Loper

- LG ○ Eugene Amano
- Leroy Harris

- C ■ Kevin Mawae
- Eugene Amano

- RG ○ Benji Olson
- Leroy Harris

- RT ■ David Stewart
- Daniel Loper

## DEFENSE

- LE ○ Antwan Odom
- Sean Conover

- DT ○ Tony Brown
- Kevin Vickerson

- DT ★ Albert Haynesworth
- Kevin Vickerson

- RE ★ Kyle Vanden Bosch
- Bryce Fisher

- OLB ■ David Thornton
- Rich Scanlon

- MLB ○ Ryan Fowler
- Stephen Tulloch

- OLB ★ Keith Bullock
- Gilbe Gardner

- LCB ○ Nick Harper
- Reynaldo Hill

- SS ■ Chris Hope
- Calvin Lowry

- FS ■ Michael Griffin
- Vincent Fuller

- RCB ■ Cortland Finnegan
- Kelly Herndon

## SPECIALISTS

- K ★ Rob Bironas

- P ■ Craig Hentrich

- KR ● Chris Henry

- PR ● Chris Davis

- LS ■ Ken Amato

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 24th

## NEEDS

**1. WIDE RECEIVER** ▶ The Titans lacked a consistent downfield threat in 2007, and while Justin Gage proved to be a nice surprise, the team needs more playmakers. Roydell Williams and Brandon Jones have been inconsistent in their first three NFL seasons, and veteran David Givens continues to struggle in his attempt to return from a 2006 knee injury. The team is expected to make a run at a veteran receiver in free agency, but will also look to the draft. Florida's Andre Caldwell or LSU's Early Doucet would provide an instant big-play threat, while Texas' Limas Sweed will certainly be on the radar.

**2. TIGHT END** ▶ Bo Scaife has been a dependable target for quarterback Vince Young and will be a part of the offense again this fall. But Scaife has limitations, and the Titans need a tight end who offers more big-play potential such as Indianapolis' Dallas Clark or San Diego's Antonio Gates. USC's Fred Davis catches the ball well in crowds, but isn't extremely fast. One strong target is Texas A&M's Martellus Bennett, who could turn out to be a gem.

**3. RUNNING BACK** ▶ LenDale White rushed for 1,110 yards and was dependable last season, playing in all 17 games. But the Titans still haven't been able to identify a back who complements White and provides a change of pace. Chris Brown fizzled after a fast start in 2007 and may not be back. Tennessee needs someone who can help on every down. East Carolina's Chris Johnson and Georgia's Thomas Brown are intriguing prospects.

**4. GUARD** ▶ Veteran Benji Olson is mulling retirement, and guard Jacob Bell is expected to leave as a free agent. The Titans have a backup ready to fill the hole in Eugene Amano, but don't have a lot of depth behind him. The team remains confident in 2007 fourth-round pick Leroy Harris, but he's still inexperienced. With the possibility of losing two starters, Tennessee needs help at this position. Maryland's Andrew Crummey or Pittsburgh's Mike McGlynn could fit the team's style.

**5. RETURN MAN** ▶ Pacman Jones made the return game interesting in 2006. But last season, this area was dull, except for when Chris Davis' fumbling issues turned it into an adventure. Tennessee didn't help itself much last season and needs to identify a returner who would give the team a threat to break a long run.

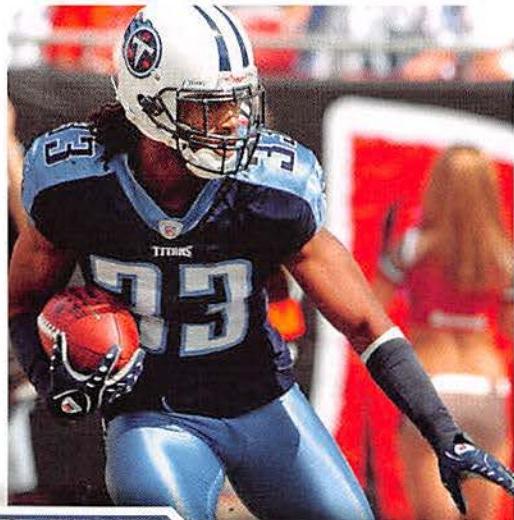
**6. DEFENSIVE TACKLE** ▶ Albert Haynesworth was one of the league's most dominant players last season, but the Titans need more help in the trenches. Tony Brown has been a pleasant surprise, but big, physical offensive linemen sometimes overpowered him. Randy Starks underachieved, and the Titans are waiting for 2007 fifth-round pick Antonio Johnson to heal following ACL surgery last August. Texas' Frank Okam is an option, along with Fresno State's Jason Shirley.

## OUTLOOK

By the end of the 2007 season, it was easy to criticize quarterback Vince Young. He was inconsistent throughout and didn't have much success throwing the ball downfield. But one can't help but wonder: Was it all Young's fault, or does the blame lie partly with a lack of top-notch targets? It's a fair question. The Titans have been reluctant to pull the trigger on a receiver early in past drafts, but have almost reached a point where they have no choice.

Tennessee has most of its starters returning from a defense that finished fifth overall in the NFL last year, so it's time the team devotes more attention to the offensive side of the ball. On the second day, the Titans will likely look to fill in holes on the offensive and defensive lines and at running back.

—Jim Wyatt, The (Nashville) Tennessean



## 2007 DRAFT

1. **MICHAEL GRIFFIN / S** (16 games/10 starts) Quickly emerged as a playmaker in run defense and against the pass ▶ B
2. **Chris Henry / RB** (7/0) Hasn't given his skeptics reason to back off yet, as he continues to be too indecisive with the ball. ▶ D
3. **Paul Williams / WR** (0/0) Didn't see the playing field because of inconsistencies in practice. ▶ F
- 4a. **Leroy Harris / C** (5/0) The Titans remain optimistic about his future despite limited playing time. ▶ C+
- 4b. **Chris Davis / WR** (12/0) Helped out some as a rookie, but remains a work in progress. ▶ C
5. **Antonio Johnson / DT** (0/0) Spent time on injured reserve, which kept him from getting in the rotation. ▶ C
- 6a. **Joel Filani / WR** (0/0) Was cut before the start of the season and ended up on Minnesota's practice squad. ▶ D
- 6b. **Jacob Ford / DE** (0/0) Tore his Achilles' tendon in August and missed the entire season. ▶ INC
- 6c. **Ryan Smith / CB** (0/0) Didn't make it out of training camp. ▶ F
7. **Michael Otto / OT** (0/0) Needs to get stronger to make an impact. ▶ D



2007 RECORD: 9-7  
www.sportingnews.com/nfl/teams/redskins

WASHINGTON

# REDSKINS



## 5-YEAR RECORD C+

The team found seven starters over the past five draft classes, including **Jason Campbell**, who has the tools to be a franchise quarterback. Tight end Chris Cooley made his first trip to the Pro Bowl last season, while S LaRon Landry has All-Pro potential. Finding starters in the draft is essential, along with getting inexpensive backups who can play special teams and develop into starters. The Redskins have done little of that lately, with the 2006 class as the lone exception. That draft netted key contributors in LB Rocky McIntosh, SS Reed Doughty and DTs Anthony Montgomery and Kedric Golston.

	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07
<b>TOTAL PICKS</b>	3	4	6	6	5
<b>STUDS</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>STARTERS</b>	0	1	2	2	1
<b>BACKUPS</b>	0	0	1	2	2
<b>OTHER TEAMS</b>	3	1	1	0	0
<b>OUT OF NFL</b>	0	2	2	2	2
<b>YEARLY GRADE &gt;</b>	D	C	B-	B	C+

## NEEDS

**1. GUARD** » Randy Thomas is a solid player and true technician, however, he suffered his second season-ending injury in the past three years. Jason Fabini filled in adequately, but is not the long-term answer. A young, mobile, rugged blocker who could be a backup on both sides would go a long way toward solidifying the team's interior line for several years. This looks to be a down year for guards, but Virginia's Branden Albert and USC's Chilo Rachal are solid options.

**2. OFFENSIVE TACKLE** » Jon Jansen missed the entire season after breaking his fibula in Week 1 and has only played in 32 games over the last four seasons. He also has a huge salary-cap number that will require renegotiating. Jansen plans to return in 2008, but the team can't count on consistency from him and needs to look for a possible replacement. Auburn's King Dunlap, who should be available at No. 21 overall, is someone to target.

**3. OUTSIDE LINEBACKER** » Rocky McIntosh had something close to a breakout year before suffering a torn ACL and MCL late in the season. He could be back by training camp, but nothing is certain considering severe knee injuries require anywhere from nine to 12 months of rehab. Virginia Tech's Xavier Adibi is a near perfect fit. He's fast, explosive and makes plays all over the field.

**4. FREE SAFETY** » After the tragic death of Sean Taylor, LaRon Landry moved to free safety. But Landry is better suited at strong safety in the NFL, and the team has few current options to replace Taylor. If available, Miami's Kenny Phillips would be a solution. He is solid in coverage and strong against the run. With the safety pool thin in this year's draft, Washington may be better off fixing this problem in free agency.

**5. WIDE RECEIVER** » When healthy, Santana Moss is an elite receiver. Antwaan Randle El also showed he can be a solid No. 2 wideout last season. However, the Redskins could still use additional players at this position, especially considering Moss's injury history. Florida's Andre Caldwell could be available when the Redskins draft in the first round, but a better alternative would be to use a second- or third-round pick to find a receiver who can be developed. If Washington chooses that route, Indiana's James Hardy or Oklahoma State's Adarius Bowman are good options.

## 2007 DRAFT

- LaRON LANDRY / S** (16 games/16 starts) Showed playmaking ability, was an excellent strong safety and proved he can play free safety just as well. ► A
- Dallas Sartz / LB** (0/0) Was cut in training camp. ► F
- H.B. Blades / LB** (16/0) Proved to be productive on special teams and shined at linebacker late in the season. ► B
- Jordan Palmer / QB** (0/0) Failed to make Washington's roster, and was recently signed by Cincinnati, where he'll join big brother Carson. ► D-
- Tyler Ecker / TE** (0/0) A hamstring injury placed him on injured reserve the entire season. ► INC

## FIRST-ROUND PICK 21st

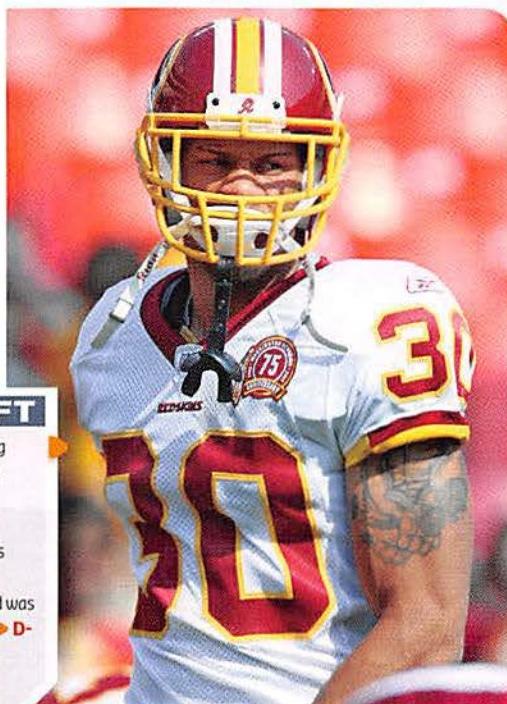
**6. CORNERBACK** » Washington has issues here. Carlos Rogers is coming back from a major knee injury, Fred Smoot is solid but not elite and Shawn Springs could become a salary-cap casualty. Good cornerbacks can be found throughout the draft, and the team needs to grab one in the later rounds. Taking a chance on Arkansas' Matternal Richardson or Auburn's Jonathan Wilhite could prove beneficial.

## OUTLOOK

Team owner Dan Snyder and executive vice president of football operations Vinny Cerrato are now in control of the draft. Snyder is not afraid to try new ideas or spend money, but as past years have shown, that doesn't always guarantee success. Cerrato has assembled a capable scouting staff and has proven he can find solid players in the later rounds.

Snyder is not one to sit and watch. He's quite proactive, and it won't be surprising if he moves up in the draft. If that happens, Snyder must find someone who can both start right away and become an impact player down the line. In the middle rounds, the team will hunt for a weakside linebacker and quality cornerback. At some point, the team needs to restock the roster with low-cost draft choices who can be developed. This would be a good year to start.

—Paul Woody, Richmond Times-Dispatch



## PROJECTED DEPTH CHART

★ Elite  
■ Solid  
○ Adequate  
● Fringe

### OFFENSE

QB	■ Jason Campbell ● Mark Brunell
FB	■ Mike Sellers ○ Todd Yoder
RB	■ Clinton Portis ■ Ladell Betts
WR	■ Santana Moss ○ James Thrash
WR	■ Antwaan Randle El ● Keenan McCardell
TE	★ Chris Cooley ○ Todd Yoder
LT	★ Chris Samuels ○ Stephan Heyer
LG	■ Pete Kendall ● Lorenzo Alexander
C	■ Casey Rabach ● Rick DeMulling
RG	■ Randy Thomas ○ Jason Fabini
RT	■ Jon Jansen ○ Stephan Heyer

### DEFENSE

LE	■ Phillip Daniels ○ Demetric Evans
DT	■ Cornelius Griffin ○ Lorenzo Alexander
DT	■ Anthony Montgomery ○ Kedric Golston
RE	■ Andre Carter ○ Demetric Evans
OLB	○ Rocky McIntosh ○ Randall Godfrey
MLB	★ London Fletcher ○ Khary Campbell
OLB	■ Marcus Washington ○ Randall Godfrey
LCB	■ Shawn Springs ● David Macklin
SS	○ Reed Doughty ○ Pierson Prioleau
FS	★ LaRon Landry ○ Pierson Prioleau
RCB	○ Carlos Rogers ○ Fred Smoot

### SPECIALISTS

K	○ Shaun Suisham
P	○ Derrick Frost
KR	■ Rock Cartwright
PR	■ Antwaan Randle El
LS	★ Ethan Albright

# Street & Smith's Sporting News

**Dear readers:**

America's leading sports annuals—*Street & Smith's* and *Sporting News*—have become one.

American City Business Journals Inc., *Street & Smith's* parent company, purchased *Sporting News* late last year.

We have adopted the *Sporting News* flag for the annuals because *Sporting News* is an integrated sports media company whose operations also include the "first newsmagazine in sports," a Web-based fantasy division and a nationwide radio network.

The "new" yearbooks will be a blend of the best of *Street & Smith's*, America's oldest sports annuals, and *Sporting News* yearbooks.

*Sporting News* annuals will be published in Charlotte, N.C., headquarters of American City and the *Street & Smith's* Sports Group.

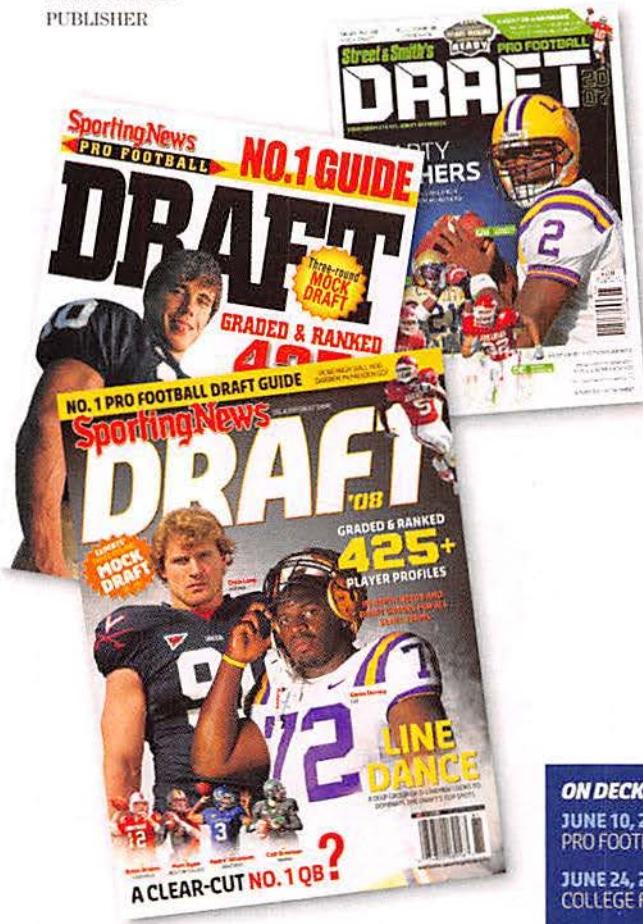
Titles will continue to include previews and predictions for baseball, hockey, pro and college football, pro and college basketball, fantasy baseball and football, and four NASCAR publications.

We believe the combined resources of *Street & Smith's* and *Sporting News* will create a new standard for excellence in sports yearbooks.

Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact us at [annuals@sportingnews.com](mailto:annuals@sportingnews.com) or [annuals@streetandsmiths.com](mailto:annuals@streetandsmiths.com). We'd love to hear from you.

Sincerely,  
**SPORTING NEWS YEARBOOKS**

MIKE KALLAY  
PUBLISHER



# Sporting News

YEARBOOKS

**2008 PRO FOOTBALL DRAFT GUIDE** March 2008

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